

zeme FOLKTALES



**PAUNING HAİKAM
KEDUTSO KAPFO**



सत्यमेव जयते

Central Institute of Indian Languages

(Ministry of Human Resource Development, Dept. of Higher Education,
Government of India)

Manasagangotri, Mysore – 570 006
India

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FOREWORD

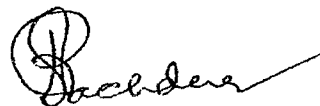
40 years ago when the Central Institute of Indian Languages was set up, one of its main objectives was to act as a nodal agency for language related research in India. The study of folklore engaged the attention of the Institute right from its inception. The Folklore unit of the Institute became a leader in the study of folklore across the country. This must be recognized because prior to that the accounts of folklore were confined to report of British Administrators or the Missionaries and it was only Central Institute of Indian Languages which wanted to establish the study of folklore in the matrix of inquiry into the nature of human mind, culture and society. The Institute did commendable work in the area of tribal languages and many of the linguists collected several folk materials for textual analysis. Several international scholars were engaged in dialogue on the subject with experts from the Institute. However, a great deal still needs to be done for the Institute to revitalize folklore studies since they are of great importance.

“Folklore as currently understood goes beyond religious or supernatural beliefs and practices, and compasses the entire body of social tradition whose chief vehicle of transmission is oral or outside institutional channels.” It is, often, a source of history for predominantly oral languages. Since Nagas are known to have a very rich component of folklore which is being passed down the generations through word of mouth, the documentation of folk materials is bound to be an important integral component of the development of the language and culture of the people.

There is also a concern in many circles that just as languages are viewed as endangered, the entire cultural fabric is also under threat because of rapid advancement in technology and social change. Modern societies are being de-linked from their ancient tradition and unless attempts are made now indigenous knowledge system links to the folklore will also be lost. It is, therefore, commendable that in this collection the authors have prepared a scholarly collection of Zeme folktales which combined legend, dance, ballad and ritual, carnival and so on in relation with social structure and biology and ecology that still thrive in oral literature among the Zeme Community. The tales reflect the

dynamic character of Naga folk culture as a whole and the Zeme community, in particular. The central theorem one could find from this combination of Zeme folktales is, they vividly portray the deep and passionate lives of the ancestors of the Zeme community and the way they treated animals as a part of human society in the ancient world.

We hope this collection will help not only preserve the folk literature of Zeme community, but also become a valuable contribution to the folklore studies in the country. I congratulate the authors.



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PREFACE

The Nagas are spread over Nagaland, part of Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Burma and Assam. It is therefore difficult to ascertain, even today, about their total number of population and the languages they speak. One of the uniqueness of the Nagas is that, wherever they may be, they passionately lived in folklorist's lives. Every tribe or community of the Nagas has their own rich folk literature. There is however striking contrast between modern technology and folk tradition. The coming of modern education and technology has immensely benefited younger generation in their advancement of knowledge. At the same time, it also endangers the survival of their culture and tradition. The present day generation does not get much opportunity to listen to their folktales as much as their older generations did. Today, the tradition of folk gathering in the night-hours which play major role in transmission of folktales from generation to generation is almost extinct even in most of the villages. This may be due several reasons. Three major reasons may be speculated here.

The first is the spread of Christianity in the villages. The tradition of night-hour gatherings where the young adults got opportunity to listen to the folktales told by their elders had been replaced by church services where they only listen to the sermons of the preachers.

The second is literacy which brings modern education, technology and urbanization that had penetrated in the village culture. Besides televisions, varieties of children's stories, comics and so on are available in schools and in the markets.

The third is school syllabus. Lessons incorporated in language subjects are from outside source only. Even in mother tongue textbooks, most of the stories are translated from outside source. There is hardly any local origin. This had caused negative impact on the children. Directly or indirectly, children have taken their folktales as something sub-standard and not worthy of listening to.

Incorporating folk stories of native people in the school textbooks can play not only a mere source of information about their ancestors, but also can play an important role in mental building and personality development of children. With this objective, the Central Institute of

Indian Languages, Mysore, in collaboration with the Textbook Section, Department of School Education, Govt. of Nagaland, had attempted to collect folktales from various tribes of Nagas so as to include them in mother tongue textbooks.

Compilation of the Zeme folktales is part of this objective. We wish to acknowledge our gratitude to the tellers of these folktales. This compilation was possible only because of their sincere contribution.

We also thank the Director, Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore, for taking up responsibility for publication.

Authors

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1. A Step Mother

Once upon a time there lived a boy in Benreu village whose name was Herielung. Unfortunately, his mother died soon after his birth. This tragedy was too much for his father to bear, because he loved his wife so dearly. At the same time, he could not find any solution how to take care of his son. For, he had great concern for his son's future, hence did not want him remained motherless. So he thought,

“Surely, it would be better if I take a new wife so that she can look after my son.”

With this expectation he remarried. But alas! The reality was the opposite. His new wife happened to be a very cruel woman. She used to mistreat Herielung all the time.

As Herielung grew up he became a handsome young man and became fans of many girls in the village. Of the many girls in his village there were two girls who were more intimate to him and they often used to work together in one another's field. But whenever they worked together in the field he would always go away from the field and eat his lunch in solitary place. In this way he always avoided them whenever they ate lunch.

Experiencing this again and again, the two girls became curious. They wanted to know the reason as to why their boyfriend always wanted to eat meal alone. One day in the field, when he went away to answer natural call, the girls secretly opened his lunch-packet in his absence. They were so horrified to find out that his meal was mixed-up with rat faeces. They threw away all his meal that were packed by his step-mother and replaced them with theirs.

When lunchtime came, the girls insisted him to come to the hut and eat meal together with them. Since the girls persisted Herielung also came to the hut and as he opened his lunch-packet he found what his girlfriends did to his lunch-packet. He felt so a shame that he could not eat lunch with them.

The girls were innocent, so they asked the reason why his meal was mixed up with rat faeces. The boy told that his step-mother used to collect the rat faeces from storehouse and mixed them up with his meals even in the past.

In the evening, when they were returning home he asked his girlfriends to lend him their shawls for awhile. The girls obliged. He then climbed up on a tree with the shawls and sat on a branch. As he sat, he began to act like a hornbill on the tree. He then asked his girlfriends if he were looking like a hornbill. His girlfriends said with laughter,

“Yes, you look as handsome as a hornbill!”

Again, he asked if he were acting exactly well like a hornbill. They again cheerfully laughed at him and said,

“Yes, acting exactly like a hornbill!”

As it was getting dark his girlfriends asked him to climb down; but he, instead of getting down, began to sing,

Is it looking like a hornbill?
Just like a real hornbill?
Please come down, let us go!
To perch on tall trees I'll not get down, darling;
On the day when a flock of hornbills appear,
Take your baby and look up, darling.
Select the best feathers from my tail,
And drop it unto you, darling.

felt a shame too. The orphan looked at the boys and found them that they did not know how to gather bamboo, split them and turning them into rope. He was feeling sorry for them, but at the same time he realized that it was disgraceful for a man unable to do such a normal job. So he thought that it might embarrass them if instructed. So instead of instructing them he began to sing a song in order to let them know how to split rope.

Split bamboo from the bottom!
Sharpen it from the top!
You stupid people!

After singing the song he went his way back home. By hearing the song they learnt the process of making bamboo rope. Since that time onward they were given the name 'thirty-only son'.

The thirty sons were so grateful to the orphan boy. So in order to express their gratitude each one of them would offer one spoonful of wine and a mouthful of food to the orphan boy whenever they went for community fishing, hunting and so on. They did this to him because, he was poor and usually used to accompany with the community without Tiffin. With the 30 spoonful of wine and the 30 mouthful of food he would drink and eat to his full satisfaction. So he composed a song:

Those who don't have girlfriend get good wife;
Those who don't carry wine have bigger mug;

2. An Orphan and Thirty-only Son

Once in a Zeme village there were 31 families. It so happened that each family had only one son, and out of which one was an orphan. The orphan boy was still very young, but there was no one to take care of him. Therefore, he had to earn his living from rich people by doing different types of works. In this way he had acquired knowledge of doing various types of work.

But those 30 other boys in his village, who being the only son in the family, were exceedingly loved by their parents; hence they lived in luxury. As a result of which they all became extremely lazy.

According to Zeme tradition, by February every year, people used to gather bamboo rope for construction of houses. So one day, as the season came, all the villagers, including the 30 sons and the orphan, went to jungle to gather bamboo rope. Any type of work, whether easy or difficult, needs certain technique and gathering bamboo rope is not an exception. It requires certain process of making the rope out of bamboo and gathered them to carry home.

When the villagers reached the jungle, they spread to different directions to collect bamboo and made them into rope. In this way, each one was busy making their own and there was no time for anyone to do for others. As per the Zeme tradition, it was so disgraceful for a man not knowing to do such a normal job. Unfortunately, the 30 sons did not know how to do it. For, they did not know the process of splitting bamboo to make them into rope. They were just puzzled and

After singing he asked his girlfriends to look at the flock of hornbill whenever they flew across their village. He assured them that he would always come along with hornbills and whenever they flew across their village they could easily identify him. He would always be the last and would also be appeared bigger than others. He also promised them to give the best feathers from his tail whenever he visited them. Saying this he transformed into a hornbill and flew away. Thereafter his girlfriends went home with tears filled on their eyes.

One fateful day when they were weaving the clothes outside their houses they saw a flock of hornbill suddenly appeared flying across their village. As they looked up curiously they saw the most beautiful and biggest hornbill flying in the last position. He flew over them, plucked his best feathers and threw them down on them.

His step-mother saw the incident so she also requested him to give her one of his feathers. With her mouth wide-open she looked up and as she requested him, the hornbill passed his excrement right into her mouth. She screamed and cursed the hornbill saying,

“Never fly over my village anymore even in future!”

Since that time onward whenever any hornbill flew over Benreu village the whole village would perform a ritual and observe a nonworking day. Even to these days, people who follow ancient religion still observe the same ritual performance.

3. Sentwangbe

Long ago there lived a handsome young man named Sentwangbe in Mhai village. He had an intimate friend, Namtwane, who had a beautiful sister whose name was Ramrieyile. As their friendship continued, gradually, Sentwangbe fell deeply in love with his friend's sister and wanted to marry her. So, he asked her hand for marriage to which she heartily agreed.

A few days later, Mhai villagers celebrated a significant festival. This festival was significant because during its celebration, all the young people must go to the jungle and collect firewood for girls' morung¹. Accordingly, when celebrating this festival all the boys and girls of the village went to the jungle to gather firewood for the girls' morung. After gathering firewood everyone went back home except Sentwangbe and his fiancée. They stayed back in the jungle to plan for their wedding. So they set up a big fire and discussed about their proposed wedding ceremony.

As they had planned for their wedding ceremony Sentwangbe told his affianced girl that he would go out to neighboring villages and look for the biggest mithun² available

¹ According to Naga tradition, some particular house(s) was constructed to let either boys or girls come and sleep together in the night. This house was commonly known as morung. Thus, they had girls' morung as well as boys' morung. In less populated villages they could have only two morungs: one for boys and the other for girls. However, in the case of largely populated villages they normally had separate morungs for each clan. This was essential for quick communication in the village in time of emergency.

² It is a variety of bison reared by Nagas and the people of Arunachal Pradesh as well. The significance of this animal is its beauty of horns and legs. The cost of animal depends largely on the beauty of the horns and legs of animal and is a pride for every man to kill it for their wedding feast.

in their area for the wedding feast. He would try to come back with the mithun in seven days. If, however, the mithun were unable to move fast, he might take few more days to return. Promising this to his fiancée he took his spear and set out for his journey the following day.

After Sentwangbe left the village, a rich young man from Peletkie village came and courted Ramrieyile. In order to appease her parents he brought with him rich treasures such as gold, silver, necklace, earrings, etc., and promised to gift them if they agreed to give their daughter to him in marriage. Greed had overwhelmed her parents and they were unable to resist the temptation. So they agreed to give away their beautiful daughter to the young man in exchange of the gifts he offered. However, Ramrieyile was not only beautiful, but also a dignified woman. She would never bow down to such devious act of her parents. So she took courage to discredit such an underhanded decision; hence refused to go with the young man.

Ramrieyile was full of despair, and yet she thought, her brother, Namtwane, on whom she had much trust, would intervene and speak to parents for her. But on the contrary, he too, like his parents, could not resist the lust of the rich gifts the Peletkie boy offered. So, he, instead of standing by the truth, went to his grand-mother and requested her to divert the mind of his sister from loving Sentwangbe by telling falsehood. His grand-mother believed what he said, so she was looking for an opportunity to speak to Ramrieyile. One morning when Ramrieyile was going on her way to draw water from the well, her grand-mother asked her to stop for awhile and remove lice from her head. Ramrieyile obliged and was removing lice from her grand-mother's head. Her grand-mother then began to speak to her by telling all falsehood about Sentwangbe. She told that Sentwangbe had established a

new village in Ramziekam and was already living there with his new wife. But Ramrieyile did not believe what her grandmother said. Since she could not be convinced with such falsehood her grand-mother advised her that it would be better for her to marry the rich Peletkie nobleman. No young man like him might come to court her in near future.

Ramrieyile loved Sentwangbe so deeply that no one including her grand-mother could move her heart. Despite all the pressures from her family members she did not lose her heart. She waited for her fiance for seven days. But he did not return home. She again waited for two more days but still it was all in vain.

Sorrows filled her heart and tears her eyes were beyond her bond; desperate as she was, lost all her resisting power. As it went on she could no longer resist the pressure from her brother and parents. Ultimately, all against her will, she was compelled to give up. So finally, she agreed to marry the young man and went with him to Peletkie village. But before departure, she prepared a dish of meat and a bottle of wine of best quality for Sentwangbe. After which she filled up a cup with her tears and instructed her younger brother who was still small boy to be given to Sentwangbe when he returned.

The next day Sentwangbe returned home with a big mithun. When he was approaching the village his parents went out and met him on the way with food and drink. He first enquired about his affianced girl, Ramrieyile, as soon as he met his parents. It was so hard for the parents to reveal the truth to him, but there was no other option; they only had to relate the whole truth to him. So they related to him the whole story how Ramrieyile was taken away by a boy from Peletkie village. Hearing this he became perplexed and motionless, as if, some alien element entered his blood stream: his nerves were

tightened as if they were all numbed. He could not even swallow the food his mother served him; sipped a little wine, pushed away the mithun and proceeded straight to his house without uttering a word.

When Sentwangbe reached home, the small boy, who was supposed to be his future brother-in-law, gave him the cup of tears and the food as was instructed by Ramrieyile. He drank the cup of tears first and ate the food next. Thereafter he lifted up his spear and rushed towards Peletkie village, but it was too late for him to catch the new couple.

Sentwangbe was determined to take back his beloved by all means. So every day he would go near to the Peletkie village and kept watching Ramrieyile from a distance. But the young Peletkie man would neither leave his wife alone nor would he permit her to go outside the village. Because he was afraid that she might go back to her village.

Sentwangbe did not give up. He continued waiting for an opportunity to speak to his lover for nine months. As the days went by, Ramrieyile conceived and gave birth to a baby boy. After which her husband thought that since she got a child she would not run away from him. So one morning he allowed her to go outside the village to fetch water alone. When she went out from the village and was going towards the well Sentwangbe suddenly appeared. He requested her to give him some water. So she quickly drew water from the well and gave him two jugs of water which he drank all at once. After drinking the water he begged her to come back with him. It was impossible for her to say 'no'; because her love for Sentwangbe was as fresh as before. So she promptly agreed to the suggestion and followed him.

At that time, Namtwane, her brother, was watching them out of their sight. When the two lovers were going along the road,

Namtwane suddenly stopped them and insulted his sister questioning whether she was going to fry or boil the baby boy. Saying this he dragged her back to her husband's village. This enraged Sentwangbe, so he hurled his spear at Namtwane; but the latter swiftly turned aside and escaped. Such a noble character as he was, Sentwangbe did not want to pursue further. So he gave up and returned home with full of disappointment. He was so dejected that he sealed his doors, windows and all the holes of his house and did not allow anyone to disturb him. In this way he lied on the bed without food for many days. Gradually he became very weak and was about to die.

When Namtwane heard about what was happening to his friend, he felt terribly sorry. So he sneaked through outside the wall of his friend's house and stood at the location where Sentwangbe was lying. He then opened a small hole through the wall and comforted him saying that he had a sister of relative named Zuyile who was as beautiful as his sister and assured him to give her in marriage. Namtwane also served him food and drink for many days. In this way, slowly and gradually, Sentwangbe regained his health and strength and became as handsome as before. He forgave his friend and thereafter they became friends again.

One day, when Zuyile was weaving at the porch of her house, Sentwangbe and Namtwane visited her. Sentwangbe carefully observed her entire body and found her as beautiful as his once affianced girl, except her heels. Since Zuyile's heels were not as beautiful as Ramrieyile's he refused to accept her as his wife. Namtwane tried his best to convince his friend, but still Setwangbe was unyielding.

Namtwane now realized that his friend's love for his sister was irredeemable. The only option for him to pacify his friend

was to suggest visiting his sister, Ramrieyile, so that he could speak to her once again. Accordingly, he suggested it to Sentwangbe to which the latter willingly agreed. So the following day, early in the morning, they packed their lunch-packet and set out together to visit Ramrieyile. Reaching her new village they found that she was living in an extraordinarily big house and part of it was used as boy's morung. When they greeted her, Ramrieyile welcomed her brother warmly and served wine to him. But to Sentwangbe, she simply ignored as if he were no worth of receiving her attention. This she did to him, because her anger against him still did not subside. She still remembered the incident when her brother dragged her away from his hand and forcefully took her back to her husband's village while Sentwangbe did nothing to rescue her. The only action he did was hurling his spear at her brother. So it was hard for her to forgive his irresolute mind. Her husband noticed all that had had happened so he instructed her to serve wine to the friend of his brother-in-law also. As instructed, she finally served Sentwangbe the best available wine. She also killed a hen and prepared a special meal for her lover and her brother.

At night, all the young men of the village came to sleep in the morung. Usually, as per Zeme tradition, they used to perform some entertainment by way of singing or some other merry making before retiring to bed. As they gathered, Sentwangbe and his friend also joined them. The boys of the village came to know that Setwangbe was a good singer and a good song composer too. So they suggested him to sing a song to which he agreed; but before singing, he told them that his song was very long and they might fall asleep if they were to listen to it till the end. But they persisted. So he began to sing; and as he sang, he simultaneously composed on the theme of love for the next verse. In this way his song became endless.

At that time Ramrieyile was quietly listening to the song of her lover from her chamber. As she listened she was deeply touched that she could not control her tears. She began to sob all alone in her room. When she was secretly sobbing in her room her child began to cry but it did not draw away her attention. Her husband, hearing the cry of the child, took him to his bed and slept with the child.

Since the song was too long all the people in the house slept except Ramrieyile and her brother. In order to give opportunity to Sentwangbe to speak to his sister, Namtwane sang in place of him. Sentwangbe then entered the chamber of Ramrieyile and they conversed for a long time. In this way they spent the whole night together talking till morning. When it was to be dawn he left her chamber, rejoined the boys and resumed his singing.

As morning had already approached the young men in the morung woke up and found that he was still singing. Sentwangbe then stopped his singing, bade adieu to Ramrieyile and left the village with his friend.

Ramrieyile and her husband dropped them till the village gate and as they crossed over the gate and disappeared into the woods a burning sensation emerged in her heart. As the realization daunted on her that this was their last meeting, she captured every detail of his departing body merge into the woods, until all that was left was the memories of her true love wrapped around her mind, accepting the reality of a different world without him for eternity.

4. Seing

Scene-i: The Birth of Seing

Once upon a time there lived a fairy which gave birth to a son and she named him Mierau. When Mierau grew up he became tall and handsome. Not only that, he became a great warrior and good sportsman too. He then took wife and soon after his marriage his wife got pregnant.

Before Mierau's wife gave birth, the king of Nkuilungdi died and they had to find a suitable man to ascend the throne urgently. Because at that time, the village was fighting war against another village, hence a competent king was badly required. But it was not easy to find such a man, because person to ascend the throne must be physically strong and extraordinarily good warrior.

When they were looking for a suitable person to be their king they came to know about Mierau. So they dispatched the village representatives to meet Mierau and requested him to become their king without delay. But as per their customary law, both the king and the queen should not be from other village. At least one of them must be the original descendant of the village. Due to this reason, Mierau could not accept the offer. But the people of Nkuilungdi fervently requested him again. Moreover, his wife too bolstered his moral saying,

“Be a man of courage! Your child and I will be alright.”

Bolstered his moral by this wife he finally accepted the offer. But before leaving his wife he left a wish,

“When you give birth you must name him ‘Seing’ if the baby is male, but if it is female you may name her according to your own choice.”

Soon after Mierau left the village she gave birth to a baby boy. So according to her husband's wish, she named him Seing. Immediately after the child was born she remarried and gave birth to another baby boy and they named him 'Peing'. As years went by, both the sons grew up together and their appearance became like twins.

Scene-ii: Seing Became Intimate Friend of Haine

One day Seing saw a man selling a nice necklace. He was so tempted by it, so he requested his mother to buy it for him. His mother obliged, but instead of giving it to him, she gave it to his younger brother, Peing. The following day, they saw another man selling an ordinary necklace. So his mother purchased it for Seing. In this way, his mother often used to show favor to his younger brother, but Seing never complained.

Seing had an aunt who married to a rich man in a nearby village. She was a very loving woman who always cared for Seing. When she came to know about the fate of Seing that his parents always used to mistreat him she was so disturbed. She was all the time thinking continuously how to help Seing to get away from this condition. As she was thinking meditatively, a thought came to her mind,

"It would be good for Seing if he established close friendship with Haine. For, although Haine is a poor orphan boy now, yet he is going to inherit his father's great magic power one day."

She told Seing about Haine's future and advised him to maintain good relationship with him always. Seing kept his aunt's advice in his mind and maintained intimacy with Haine all the time. In this way, their friendship grew stronger and stronger day by day. But Haine was curious to know the reason

as to why Seing was always good to him in spite of his poverty; yet Seing did not reveal the truth to him for a long time. After a few years, he plainly told Haine that he was good to him because of his father's great magic power, which he was going to inherit. Haine never knew this so he asked,

"Where is it?"

"Under the care of your aunt", replied Seing.

"Then let's go to my aunt and ask for it!" suggested Haine.

Scene-iii: Haine's Aunt and the Magic Power

Haine's aunt was living in another village which was a couple of days walk, but he had never visited her before. So they decided to visit her and ask for the magic power. As planned, they went to the village of Haine's aunty and looked for her one day. As soon as Haine met his aunty, he requested her to give him his father's magic power. But his aunt led him to another room and whispered,

"It is a very precious treasure, so don't talk about this in presence of strangers!"

She advised him to go back home with his friend first. But Haine objected saying,

"Aunty, listen! I am surviving because of this friend and yet, you considered him to be a stranger. I have no more parents, you know it. But you never bothered to see me even once all these years. If this friend were not with me I might have starved to death long time back." Haine continued,

"If you do not give my father's magic power to me right now I will kill myself in front of you."

Hearing the fate of Haine she felt very sorry and expressed her gratitude to Seing for taking care of her nephew. Likewise,

she advised them never to spoil their friendship even in the near future. She then assured to part the magic power to them. But in order to own it they had to observe certain procedures. So she said,

“In my garden, there is a tree called Tamtabang. Go there and cut down the tree! But listen! Before the tree fell down, either “Caingne” or “Nhangne” will come. You will never get the magic power, in case, Ciangne came and rested on the tree; but if Nhangne came and rested on it, then surely the magic power will come upon you.”

Haine and Seing cheerfully began to cut the tree. Just as their aunt had said, a big group of Nhangne came and rested on the tree just before it fell down. They were overjoyed and performed their religious rites and thereafter the magic power came upon them. As Haine share his father’s magic power with his friend, they both became strong physically. In this way, both became good sportsmen and great warriors.

Scene-iv: Festival with a Neighboring Village.

It was Zeme tradition that when two villages were in dispute and hostile to each other in the past due to some certain cause, but reconciled by some means, men of both the villages will visit each other’s village and festive together to commemorate their reconciliation. During the festivity, they will eat, drink, sing and do merrymaking in the night hour. Similarly, during day hour they will play various types of games and sports.

One day, their villagers had amicably solved a dispute with one of their neighboring villages and hence proposed to send their men to that village to festive together. During the celebration, it was customary that men must wear their best available dresses and ornaments, especially when marching to the host’s village. Women weave cloths for their men, and men

of rich family would even go out to neighboring villages and purchase ornaments they did not have.

All the men and women in the village were busy preparing dresses and ornaments for the men of the village march to their counterpart's village on the appointed day. Seing's mother wove a special shawl for his younger brother; but for him, she wove a very ordinary one. Seing had many admirers among the girls in his village. But among all the girls he had two intimate girlfriends. When his girlfriends saw their lover's shawl, they resented against his mother and resolved to put her to the ground. They resourcefully wove a new one that was much better than the one woven by Seing's mother and gave it to their lover to be worn on the occasion. When his parents saw Seing's shawl they became so incensed at it, but could not forbid him from wearing it during the celebration.

Anxiety instilled into the minds of every man in the village as the day of festival was approaching very near. When Seing saw the head-gear of his younger brother that was made by his father with a special animal skin, he was tempted by it. So he humbly requested his father to make one for him also. Spitefully, however, his father brought a leaf from a tree called "mrim" and made a head-gear out of it. Seeing this he was so disgusted with his parents so he went to his friend, Haine, and explained everything to him how his parents had done to him.

So loyal was Haine to his friend, they made a plan, which worked out quite well. In Zeme culture, a boy who put on an ornament called "henet netdi" was the envy of everyone. Only boys from rich family could afford to own it. All the boys in the village except Haine and Seing owned this ornament. So they conceived a brilliant idea.

They were to march to their counterpart's village on the next day. So before that, Seing secretly went to that village in the

night and met the chief priest. He convinced the chief priest to proclaim as it was gena (religious prohibition) for anyone to put on “henet-netdi” during the celebration. After getting assurance from the village chief priest he went straight back to Haine’s house and conveyed the news to him. When he entered inside Haine’s house, he found that his friend had caught different kinds of birds with varieties of colors in order to adorn their dresses with those feathers.

The following day, when they reached the gate of their counterpart’s village, the chief priest of that village came out and announced,

“My dear friends, it is a great privilege for us to receive you as our esteemed guest. But I regret to say that the ornament called henet-netdi could not be worn by anyone inside our village for a few days; because we are observing our religious rites of sowing crops these days.”

They were so surprised by the announcement, but had no other option. They only had to remove hetne-netdi from them. When they entered the village, all the people of the host village were highly pleased with the dresses and ornaments worn by Seing and Haine, because they were well embellished with different types of feathers; but for the other boys, they simply set them aside. In this way, the villagers conferred great honor upon Seing and Haine and hospitably served them with delicious food and drink.

As the festival began, men of both the villages enjoyed together eating, drinking; introducing themselves to one another and exchanging warm greetings with one another. While celebrating the festival they also played varieties of games and sports. In the games and sports, no one from both the villages was as smart as Seing and Haine. They stood best in all the games and sports.

In one occasion, Seing and Haine organized a merrymaking game for young boys of both the villages. When playing the game they applied their magic power. With their magic power they made bird feathers and put the magic power upon all of them. They then announced,

“Those who get more feathers will have more girlfriends!”

As they announced, the feathers were thrown among the boys. Everyone tried their best to gather the feathers as much as one could. In this way, everyone joyfully played the game.

Scene-v: Born as Warrior

A few days after the festival, men of Seing’s village secretly planned to set out a war expedition to their enemy village without Haine and Seing. They neither informed this to Seing or Haine. Since Seing did not know about their treacherous programme he went out with his two girlfriends to take bath in a well. At that time, an old lady also went to the well to fetch water. She was surprised to see Seing there in the well so she asked,

“Seing-o, why didn’t you accompany with your friends?”

“Accompany with whom?” Seing inquired.

“All the warriors of the village had gone to raid enemy village this morning. I know you are a good warrior. You can fight enemy mightily more than any other man. You should join them.”

As soon as Seing heard it, he immediately went home, dressed up himself with his warrior dresses, took out his weapons and rushed after other warriors. On the way they were ambushed by enemy and on reaching the spot he found that the

warriors of his village were running away. As he looked for his younger brother, Peing, he found him surrounded by the enemy warriors and was about to be slain. Seing cried out a war cry “Hi-lo-lo-lo”, jumped over the enemy warriors and protected his younger brother. They did not leave the battle to each other, but both together fought with all possible vigor and fury. As they fought, they slew the enemy warriors one after another and finally slew all of them. Seing slew enemy warriors so much that he could not carry their heads. So he chopped off the ears of the enemy warriors he slew letting other warriors carry the heads to the village.

After the fight was over, Seing went to the village in advance and informed the Village Chief Priest that the heads without ears were slain by him. This, he informed the priest so that no one else might claim them as to be their victim.

In the evening, the village warriors who went to war expeditin returned singing warrior rhymes. As they arrived the chief priest came out from his palace and announced,

“All the heads without ears were killed by Seing.”

When they unloaded the heads in front of the chief priest, all were without ears except the lone head brought by Peing. When Seing threw all the ears into a big basket, it was filled with the ears.

Scene-vi: Aunt's Festival

One day, the family of Seing's aunt proposed to host a feast for their village and invited all the family members of Seing. Seing's father however did not want him to attend the feast so he cunningly conceived a plan. They had a vast area of woodland. He asked Seing to go and cut down the bushes for jhum cultivation before going to the festival. He said,

“Seing-o, you cannot come to the feast before the completion of the assigned work.”

Saying this, his father left for the festival with Peing and his wife. Seing, though very much willing to go with them, had to obey his father. He was, anyway, determined to participate in his aunt’s feast by all means. So he began to work day and night without resting. His friend, Haine, came to know about the incident so he went and helped Seing. In this way they took about ten days to complete the task. Since the land was so shrubby and full of thorns, the thorns of shrub pierced all over their bodies.

The day of the feast had already approached, but Seing’s aunt did not want the festival to begin without the presence of Seing so she postponed it till his arrival.

After the completion of the work, Seing and Haine went straight to their aunt’s village without even removing thorns from their bodies. They silently entered inside their aunt’s house from the backdoor. When their aunt saw them, she was overjoyed. She immediately ordered her servants to kill a fat dog for them to dine that night.

In the morning, she meticulously removed the thorns from all over their bodies without letting anyone noticed it. When evening came, she dressed them up with magnificent dresses with two spears each and made them entered through the front door pretending as if they just arrived from their village. Seing’s father became so jealous of it and he, instead of saying a word of appreciation, boasted off on the food and drink they were feasting with. Observing this, Seing’s aunt was infuriated and her heart began to throb. Anyway, she subdued her anger.

Seing’s aunt wanted to fully bring down Seing’s stepfather to the ground. So after a moment, she announced that they had

kept the fattest and biggest dog to be killed in the name of Seing. She then asked young men who were present in the feast to kill the dog. They tried to kill it with wooden-hammer. But since the dog was very big and strong they could not kill it even with wooden-hammer. Finally, she asked Seing if he were able to. Seing stood up and hit the dog's head with his elbow. As the dog was hit so hard it felt unconscious and died instantly. He lifted it up and gave it to his aunt who then prepared dish with it in a big vessel. Seing lifted up the big pot with one hand and distributed the meat to all the guests present with the other hand and said,

“Eat my pickle!”

It was the tradition of Zeme's usual custom that when a family hosted feast to the village they never simply killed the animals kept for the feast, but letting the young men in the village play with them as a game and kill them. For the game, Seing's aunty kept two mithuns and two pigs. She let the young men played the first game to catch the mithuns.

Game of “catching mithun” is very risky and it is only for strong and smart men to play with, because the mithuns are very ferocious and could even kill the players.

As the young men surrounded the mithuns and attempted to catch them the crowd spectators also began to cheer loudly so as to excite the animals more and more. In this way the animals became so ferocious and violent. They ran hither and thither to find way for escape. As the game went on for sometime Seing finally caught the bigger mithun and also helped his brother, Peing, to catch the smaller one. But their father did not like Seing to be the hero; so he, instead of telling the truth, announced that the bigger mithun was caught by Peing despite all the spectators witnessed that it was Seing who caught the bigger one. Not only that, they also witnessed

that Seing applied trick to the mithun to enable his younger brother catch the other one.

After the catching mithun game was over, Seing's aunt let out two big pigs, and like the earlier game, Seing caught the bigger one and trampled the smaller one. This time also he gave the smaller pig to Peing. As before, their father started cheering Peing by saying,

"It is Peing who caught the bigger one."

When evening came, men-folk gathered and feasted together, eating, drinking and merry making. When they were relating the day's game of catching mithuns and pigs, joking and laughing away at one another, Seing's father repeated the same utterance as what he said before,

"It is Peing who caught the bigger mithun and pig."

This embarrassed Seing, so he suggested his father to restrain which was echoed by others. His own son, Peing, too, restrained him from repeating the statement that was untrue.

Now, Seing's father was cornered. The stream of blood from his body suddenly rushed to his face that it became like red-ash. He felt so out of place in the midst of everybody and could not remain in the feast any longer. He wanted to leave the gathering and go back to his village all alone even in the night.

Seing felt terribly sorry for this so he earnestly requested his father not to travel at night hour. Because there was war going on between Tamrialwame village and their village and was unsafe to travel in the night. But his father was unyielding. So finally Peing offered himself to give company to their father.

*Scene-vii: Brotherly Relation between Seing and His
Younger Brother*

Soon after Peing and his father crossed the village gate, Tamrielwame warriors raided them from their hide-out and wounded Peing's abdomen with spear very badly. They also took away some of their belongings. Peing, though injured so badly, did not give up his head to the enemy. He heroically fought with the enemy letting his father go back and report the incident to Seing. As soon as Seing heard it, he rushed to the spot with his weapons and challenged the enemy warriors saying,

“If you do not return the belongings you took away I will not spare even the hearths of your kitchens.”

The warriors of Tamrialwame knew well the might of Seing and no one of them dared to challenge him. They simply gave back all the belongings they took away to Seing.

There were also some villagers from Seing's village who attended the feast. But since it was so sudden that no one of them knew about the reason why Seing had to rush away. Anyway, they also followed him afterwards and got Seing on the way. Since Seing did not disclose anything to them about the incident they did not have the slightest premonition about the enemies hiding in the bushes to attack them. Peing, who was badly injured, was also in their midst but they did not see his wound since it was dark. Knowing the danger, Seing advised them to move fast, but they did not heed. They were still moving freely and slowly all the way. At last, Seing was annoyed, so he related the whole event to them what had happened just before they came and showed them the wound caused to Peing by the enemies. As soon as they saw the sign of danger, they all sped away as if running a race in the competition.

On reaching their village, they spread the news about what had happened to Peing on the way and how Seing had rescued his younger brother. The news spread all over the village like wild fire. Their mother also came to know that her sons and husband were on their way so she went out to meet them with food and drink. At the same time, Seing's two girlfriends also went out to meet their lover on the way with food and drink, for they felt that Seing's mother might not share with him the food and drink she carried with her.

On the way Seing met his mother but, as felt by his girlfriends, she turned her face away from him as if he were a stranger and went straight to Peing and her husband. The girlfriends of Seing followed and cheerfully greeted him; made him sit down by the side of the road and served him food and drink they carried with them; thereafter to themselves. In this way, they joyfully shared together the delicious food and drink they brought with them.

A little away from them were his mother, Peing and his father. His mother served food and drink to Peing and his father. But before putting the food into his mouth Peing asked,

“Mother, did you give food and drink to Seing?”

“No!” she replied nastily.

“In that case, I will also not eat,” fumed Peing.

Peing continued,

“I'm alive just because of Seing. If he failed to protect me I would be a dead man by now. How can I eat without him?”

Since Peing refused to eat his mother went to Seing and asked for apology. She requested him to come and share food

with Peing. Although Seing had already eaten with his girlfriends, he obliged his mother for the sake of Peing.

Scene-viii: Seing and His Father

Seing was always puzzled if he were the progeny of his mother so he requested her to tell him the truth, but she would never reveal the fact. As Seing did not give up she could not hide the truth any longer. Virtually, his mother never hated him. She had, in fact, so much compassion on him, but circumstance compelled her to act in such a manner. She bitterly wept and said,

“Of course, you are my flesh and blood, but the one with whom we are living is your stepfather. You are, in fact, the progeny of another man whose name is Mierau. He is a noble man. But due to a compelling reason, he had to leave us behind.”

She told Seing all the facts from the beginning to the end about her life story.

“I must go and see my father.” Seing exclaimed.

“Nkuilungdi village is fiercely fortified and would never permit any stranger enter inside the village. Therefore, it would be impossible for you to meet your father,” warned his mother.

Whatever consequence Seing was determined to meet his father. He foresaw the danger, so he decided to leave his girlfriends behind. But they were so determined to give him company. They said,

“If you die, we will also die with you. If you live we will also live with you. We will follow you wherever you go.”

Finally Seing also agreed to take them with him. He made all the necessary preparations and then set out his journey with

his two girlfriends. When they reached the village gate of Nkuilungdi, Seing hid his girlfriends in a safe place nearby the gate. As the gate was closed securely, he first knocked it gently; but there was no response. He did the same, but still there was no one to open the gate. The third time he broke the door of the gate with a hard kick. Then someone inside the village shouted loudly,

“Who is there at the gate?”

Seing did not respond, but majestically entered inside the village. As he entered he saw a man who happened to be his father Mierau whom he was looking for. Mierau was very furious to see a stranger breaking his gate door which was hewed from a strong single wood. With ferocity he shouted at Seing,

“Who is this wretched person opening the gate without my permission. No man, even bird can fly across my gate.”

He cried out a war cry and charged Seing with a wooden club, but Seing escaped. After which, Mierau took out 30 spears and darted them at Seing one after another, but not a single spear touched Seing's skin, because Seing was so swift in dodging them. Lastly, Mierau dispatch his well-trained killer dog called “Teugwalei”. But the dog too could not do any harm to him. Seing killed the dog with his bare foot without much effort.

Mierau had used all his powers, but to no avail. He had no other option but to submit and propose for peace. Seing, without a word, grabbed his father's throat and pushed him against the wall with his full might and said,

“I am the son of Mierau.”

When Mierau realized how he tried to kill his own son, his sadness knew no bound in one way; at the same time, he felt

proud of his young and talented son. After knowing each other, he informed his father that his girlfriends were hiding nearby the gate. So Mierau promptly asked his son to bring them to his palace. Accordingly, Seing brought them to his father's palace and his father warmly welcomed them. Out of joy, Mierau arranged banquet that night in the name of Seing and his two girlfriends.

In Mierau's kingdom, there lived a man who had 7 sons. They were very strong and proud, too. They would never accept the authority of Mierau as their king, but frequently challenged him for a fight and wrestling. Whenever they defeated Mierau in the fight they would forcefully put filthy matters such as cow-dung into his mouth. In this way, they frequently harassed Mierau in full public view.

Mierau was looking for an opportunity to avenge. Noticing the strength and extraordinary talent of his son, he gained confidence. He was confident that his son would be able to take his revenge, so he made a plan to fix a wrestling match between his son and the 7 brothers. But before that Mierau had to test his son's skills in wrestling; because, he being a good sportsman knew that wrestling did not solely depend on one's strength but skills were important components.

As his father commanded him to demonstrate his skills of wrestling, Seing asked his girlfriends to give him a shawl so as to use it as belt in wrestling. They tied round his waist with it. But when he keyed up his strength it distended his muscle and as a result of which the cloth was torn apart. They gave him another shawl stronger than the earlier one. This time, the cloth did not tear apart when he energized his strength. Initially, Seing pretended of ignorance about the skills of wrestling which had disheartened his father. But later he showed his skills of wrestling and his father was happy.

As it was the tradition of Zeme people, in order to enhance the strength and stamina the wrestler must be fed with rich food and drink. Accordingly, his father fed him with rich food and drink for a few weeks. After which Mierau fixed a day for the 7 sons to wrestle with his son, 'Seing'. He named the day as "Hetarasam".

On the day of Hetarasam, both Seing and the 7 brothers entered the arena. All the 7 brothers wrestled with Seing one by one, but none of them was able to defeat him. After the wrestling was over, Seing caught hold of the eldest brother and asked his father, Mierau, to put his excreta into his mouth. This, he did to the eldest brother because he was the one who used to instigate his brothers and challenge his father. But Mierau being the king of the village preferred to show mercy. So Seing, in order to fully satisfy himself for his father's revenge, put his own stool into the mouth of that brother. After this incidence, the seven brothers did not dare to challenge the authority of Mierau anymore.

When Mierau became very old he made his son 'Seing' succeed his throne. Seing ruled the kingdom wisely effectively and lived happily with his wives and dear old father ever after. In this way, the whole village lived in peace and harmony throughout till his last day of kingship.

5. Nkiemswang

Once upon a time there lived a small boy named Nkiemswang in Poilwa village. Nkiemswang was the only child in the family who always tried to follow his parents whenever they went to the field. But since their field was very far away from the village it was not possible for the little boy go. Therefore, his mother used to pacify him to stay at home and whenever he obliged she would give him an egg. In this way, the small boy used to stay at home all alone every day and patiently waiting for the return of his parents the whole day.

One morning, it so happened, that Nkiemswang refused to listen to his mother. She tried to convince him by various means but unsuccessful. Finally, she lost her temper. So, instead of giving him the egg, she beat him harshly and went straight to the field leaving behind her son crying in the house. After crying for a while he got up and went sobbing along the path his parents took. He went further and further away from the village, but still could not catch his parents. In this way he went very far away from his village. Then suddenly a great storm came and a small stream which he had to cross was flooded. He could not cross the stream because its current became too strong so he was compelled to return home all alone.

When Nkiemswang was on his way back home, he met a stranger. The stranger, instead of helping the small child to reach home, took advantage of his helplessness and kidnapped the child for gain.

In other days, Nkiemswang sportingly used to run out and happily received his parents whenever he heard their call. But

they found it very unusual that evening when they return home. Nkiemswang did not come and greeted them even after they called out his name several times. Everything was still and quiet in the house. They were perplexed!

Since they could not find him in the house any more they went back along the path towards the field calling out Nkiemswang, Nkiemswang, all the way; but there was no response. As they went on calling him, Nkiemswang heard his parents' call from a far distance. He tried to respond to his parents' call, but could not, because the man had closed his mouth was to kill him if he made noise.

The next day, the kidnapper took him to a village called Benreu and sold him to a couple who had no son, but the only daughter named Dirangswale. In Zeme society, it was considered misfortune if the family had no son so they were overjoyed to get such a handsome young boy. Both the parents and the daughter loved him so much and hence took care of him well. But they did not want to reveal their happiness to the villagers. In order to make the people perceived that they were mourning on the fate of the boy they put ashes on his body and left him at the village gate through which people used to go to their fields every morning so that all the passerby might notice him. When the field-goers saw him they murmured,

“Dirangswale’s father bought this child and ill-treated him.”

Some of the passersby felt pity on the boy so they gave him food to eat, but some others simply mocked at him. Some even kicked him and beat him with stick.

When everyone had gone to the field they would then bring the boy back to their house, washed off the ashes from his

body and served him good foods. Again, when it was time for the field-goers return home they would put a little husk in the grinding-board letting him pound them. In this way, when the passersby heard the pounding sound they would say,

“Dirangswale’s parents are very unkind to the boy.”

In this way, his new parents took care of him for several days. He grew up handsome, brave and also a good sportsman. No boy in his village was able to play like him. One year, the two villages, Benreu and Poilwa, decided to have an inter-village athletic tournament in Poilwa village. But Nkiemswang’s parents were reluctant to send him there fearing that he might be identified by his real parents. But as Nkiemswang’s friends fervently requested them they finally permitted him to go on the condition that they would bring him back by all means.

Nkiemswang and his friends reached his native village Poilwa safely and as they arrived, the tournament began. Men of both the villages participated in it and Nkiemswang stood first in all the events.

After the play was over, boys of Benreu village had to spend the night at Poilwa village. It was Zeme tradition to extend hospitality to any guest coming from outside the village and every household of the Poilwa village was to host at least one man from Benreu village that night. Accordingly, each one came and picked up their guests one by one. But no one picked up Nkiemswang; thus leaving him all alone standing outside a morung (community house). This happened out of jealousy, because he stood best from among the men of both the villages in all the events.

When he was all alone standing outside the morung with his shield in his hand an elderly woman, who happened to be his aunt came and said,

“Young man, what are you doing there? If you are not invited by others, come and spend the night in my house.”

With gratitude he followed the woman to her house. As they entered her house she let him sit down and then served him rice and wine in the plate from which she used to feed her fowls. When he was eating, he looked up and saw a cup and a plate that were hanging on the inner roof. He then exclaimed,

“Those cup and plate are just like my childhood cup and plate.”

When she heard it she became curious. So she asked,

“What is your name?”

“People call me Rayibe but when I was a child my parents used to call me Nkiemswang” was the reply.

As soon as she heard it she immediately took the cup and plate from him and threw them away. She then served him fresh food and better quality of wine from the new cup and new plate telling him that she was his aunty. After which she informed his parents and relatives about him who told that she had found Nkiemswang. All of them were jubilant when they came to know about the good news; at the same, they were unable to believe that he was truly Nkiemswang. The house was full of joy and happiness, for the boy was lost; yet found again. Some were crying, while some others were laughing. Nkiemswang’s mother was inconsolable, crying and touching all over his body as if searching for some scar; while at the same time, accusing herself saying,

“Your monstrous mother, what did I do to you?”

The house was filled with commotion and no one seemed to remember when to go to bed.

The next day when men from Benreu village gathered to go back to their village, Nkiemswang was also ready to join them. But his parents and relatives did not let him. He tried his best to convince them, but they were not yielding initially. But when he said that he was alive only because of his new parents; for, they not only sheltered him but fostered him well and that he had already sworn to them that he would come back to them by all means. He also told them that his fostered sister, Dirangswale, was very beautiful. They loved each other so much and he was intending to marry her. Hearing this, his mother was consoled and they finally allowed him to go with his friends.

Women of Benreu village went out with food and drink to meet their dear and love ones on the way when they came to know that men of their villagers were returning from Poilwa village after tournament. Along with other women Dirangswale also went out with food and drink to meet her fostered brother, Nkiemswang. As women of their village met them on the way with food and drinks, they all sat down together on the grass. Dirangswale heard in advance about the performance of her fostered brother so she congratulated him while serving food and drink to him. They ate and drank happily together, talked and laughed happily together on the grass along with others.

Though they lived under the same roof as brother and sister, yet their youthful love gradually became stronger and stronger day by day. Finally their intimacy could not be destroyed by any force and hence they resolved to become wife and husband.

“I’ll take you as my wife when I return to my real parents. If I live here with you, our parents will never allow us to get married”, suggested by Nkiemswang.

In fact, he was looking for an opportunity to go back to his real parents by leaving his adopted parents. But Dirangswale was unwilling to let him leave them in that way.

It was Zeme tradition that boys and girls had separate morungs and no boys and girls of the village should sleep in their own house, but must go to their respective morungs and sleep there every night. One night, Nkiemswang slept on the grinding-board in the morung instead of on the bed. He rose up early in the morning, removed all his bangles, necklace and earrings, put them into the hole of grinding-board and left for Poilwa village. As usual, Dirangswale was expecting him to come home early in the morning, but Nkiemswang did not turn up. She went to the morung and enquired about him from his friends, but they said,

“Nkiemswang slept on the grinding-board last night and early in the morning we heard him removing his bangles and necklaces and left the morung without a word.”

Dirangswale looked around the grinding-board and found Nkiemswang’s bangles, necklace and earring. She collected and wrapped them in a piece of cloth. Sensing that he had left for his native village, Poilwa, she ran after him. There was a river between Poilwa and Benreu village. Dirangswale saw that Nkiemswang had already crossed the river and was proceeding towards Poilwa village. Though it was still far away from her, she called him out loudly as much as she could and requested him to wait for her, but he did not hear. Dirangswale did not give up. She ran towards the river. But as it was heavily raining the volume of water had increased by the time she

reached the river and could not cross it. So from the opposite she shouted and said,

“Don’t you want your bangles, ear-rings and necklaces?” but he did not reply. So she threw them into the river and returned home with anger.

Nkiemswang’s parents and relatives were very happy to see him back home. But, as for him, he never got peace of mind because of his love for Dirangswale. In the garden of their house there was a very tall pine tree from where he could see Dirangswale’s house. Every day, he would climb up on it and watch Dirangswale weaving cloth at the porch, but since it was too far away he could only see her as big as chick. His parents were so worried, because he might fall from it by a slight mistake. So one day, his father cut down the tree and made grinding-board with it in his absence. When he returned home he was shocked to find the tree cut down. He felt so upset with his father. He went and embraced the grinding-board and inconsolably wept. His parents comforted him by promising to bring Dirangswale as his wife. Then he stopped weeping. As promised, the following day his father went to Benreu village for marriage negotiation. Dirangswale as well as her parents happily accepted the proposal. They then fixed the date of the wedding feast without observing traditional formalities as usually observed by Zeme people.

On the day of the marriage, the villagers of Nkiemswang and Dirangswale marched from the opposite direction to meet in a valley that was dividing the two villages. Both the villagers, while marching, let the bride and the bridegroom go a little ahead of them so that they might meet each other first. But when Dirangswale was still a distance away from Nkiemswang some enemy warriors from Tamrialwa village ambushed her on the way and took away her head. On

reaching the spot, Nkiemswang, instead of seeing her joyous and smiling face, saw only her headless dead body. His anger reached his throat and could not utter a word. He took his spear and food packet, and rushed after the raiders with his dog, but could not catch them. It was already evening when he reached Tamrialwa village. There, he found an old widow living nearby the village entrance. Nkiemswang entered her house and instructed her to prepare dinner for him. He would come and eat it when he returned. Saying this he went inside the village and searched for boys' morungs. But before that he shaved his hair and painted his face so that people in the village might not recognize him.

Nkiemswang was determined to take revenge only those who killed his bride. He had to ascertain the identity of the one who killed her. As he entered inside the village of Tamrialwa, he found one morung so he asked the boys,

“Dear fellow young men, is there any restriction for a stranger to spend the night here?”

“You can stay, but today one of our villagers got the head of a stranger and we are observing the rite of war,” they replied.

Nkiemswang came to know that his fiancée was not killed by that khel³ so he said to them,

“If it is so, I'll not disturb you.”

He left them and went to another morung and asked the same question who proudly replied,

³ 'khel' roughly corresponds colony or sector of a village. Normally, each khel has its own separate morung.

“Today one young man from our khel got the head of a stranger so we are observing the rite of war by killing a pig and you can share the joy with us.”

Now, Nkiemswang had ascertained that that was the khel who killed his fiancée, so he decided to spend the night with them.

When the dinner was served he also got his share of pork. But as per the Zeme custom, it was taboo to avenge on the one we had accepted their hospitality. So secretly he opened his food packet that contained chicken and rice and ate them only, but pretending as if eating the pork they served to him. He quietly fed the pork to his dog. Since he had shaven head with painted face no one present in the morung recognized him.

The boys used to sleep on the top floor of morung. In the night, when all the young men were retired to bed, he made bamboo skewers and skillfully fixed them below the floor so that when the boys fell or jumped from it would get pierced with the skewers. After that, he collected a good amount of husks, spread them round the ground floor and burned them. He then knotted together the hairs of the boys. Since the young men were heavily drunk no one noticed what Nkiemswang was doing to them. After everything was ready, he searched for the head of Dirangswale but could not find it, because it was pitch-dark. So he uttered,

“Oh, Dirangswale! You are an extraordinary girl, please show me a sign of miracle so that I may find your head.”

As soon as he said it, there was a great lightning which enable him to find her head on the tip of a spear in one corner of the bedroom. He took his bride’s head and then shouted,

“I’m Nkiemswang, let men of Tamrialwa village come and fight with me.”

The young men woke up and when they tried to rise up from bed, they could not, because their hairs were knotted together. They fought among themselves saying “why do you pull my hair?” There was utter confusion. Some of them fell into the bamboo skewers and others fell into the burning husk. In this way, all of them were killed inside the morung.

Nkiemswang went back to the old widow and asked her to serve him dinner through the window. She put food in a plate and passed it to him through the window. As she put her head outside, Nkiemswang chopped it off, put it into his bag and hurried back to his village.

On the way, the head of the old widow complained as she was afraid to remain on the backside. So took it out from his back, slit the ears and put them into his bag. But for the earless head, he threw it away into the bush below the path.

He reached his village in the morning. On the way, he met two relative brothers of Dirangswale who were going to revenge for their sister. Before reaching Tamrialwa village, they found the head of the widow which was thrown away by Nkiemswang. They took it and came back to their village. They told their friends proudly that they had taken revenge of their sister.

Nkiemswang was appalled with their boastful claim. He showed them the two ears of the widow and told them that he left the head under a bush below the path. When the two brothers saw the ears and heard the truth about how Nkiemswang took revenge on their behalf they felt terribly a shame of their spinelessness. Nkiemswang mourned for his bride for many years.

6. Herakube and Son

People of Zeliang believed that in the beginning men and devils lived together in the same place. But devils often inflicted diseases and hardships to men and when men faced such inflictions, they used to offer sacrifices to devils for healing. Thus, during those days men lived under the dominion of devil. But as it went on, there arose a man named **Herakube** who obtained power and wisdom. He had a son whose name was **Maiserung**. With his wisdom, Herakube gained knowledge of healing and was able to heal all kinds of diseases. So sick people used to come to him for healing and they no longer worshipped devils. Death did not occur anymore among the people and they did not even remember what death was.

Devils became very angry with Herakube because people no longer offered sacrifices to them. In order to take control over the whole world, devils created various types of diseases on the people and also brought many calamities to the earth. But Herakube solved all their problems and devils' works had no effect on the people. Devils knew that Herakube would one day dominate over them if he was allowed to live on the earth any longer. So, one day, they held a convention and discussed on various issues how to solve their problems. But no one could bring any solution, so they simply resolved to kill Herakube in the following ways. They selected five powerful devils and entrusted them to inflict upon him several diseases. The first devil brought influenza, the second brought headache, the third brought stomachache, the fourth brought body pain and the fifth caused boil on Herakube.

All the five devils continuously applied their works on Herakube and as a result which he became too weak. He could not even move from his own bed. So he summoned his son to him and said,

“Maiserung, my son, I am about to die. But if you listen to me and do whatever I say, we shall live forever.”

“Yes, I shall, father,” Maiserung assured.

“Kill a dog, bring it to our field and touch trees with one of its paws! When you touch a particular tree with it, the dog will bark and come back to life. That tree is called the tree of life. Cut down one of its branches and bring it to me! As soon as I touch it, all these pains will go away from me. Then I will be as healthy and strong as before.”

Maiserung killed a dog and went to the field as per the instruction of his father. He did exactly the same what his father had instructed. He touched many trees with the dead dog’s paw. As he went on touching the tree, finally the dead dog began to bark and came back to life as soon its paw touched a particular tree. He was excited. He chopped off one of its branches to take it to his father. When he was going home, on the way, he met devils in the form of a group of people. They tricked him saying,

“Oh Maiserung, are you coming? We bring you sad news. Your father is already dead. So the stick is no more useful for him. But, hurry up and go home, otherwise you cannot attend the funeral service of your father.”

Maiserung turned cold and broke into tears. He sobbed in grief, threw away the stick and hurried home. When he

reached home he found that his father was still alive. His father asked in a very weak voice,

“My son, have you brought the stick?” Maiserung replied, “I am very sorry,” and explained to his father all what had happened on his way. His father said to him,

“Even if I die you must bring it to me.”

Once again his father sent him back to bring the same wood. So Maiserung did as before. And when he was returning home with the stick he met another group of people. They seemed to be very unhappy and were carrying pieces of meat in their hands. They said to him,

“We are coming back from the funeral service of Herakube. Your father is already buried in the grave. From today onwards you can never see your father again.”

Maiserung wept. But the devils who were in the form of men said to him again,

“You cannot save your father by weeping. He cannot hear your cry. You have nothing to do with the stick. It is no use of losing your energy carrying it.”

Maiserung again believed what the devils said. He dropped the stick there and rushed home. But when he reached home, he again found that his father was still alive, though too weak to speak. His father whispered,

“My son, have you brought the wood?”

Maiserung said to his father, “I am very sorry, this time also I was cheated by another group of people. When I was coming

home with the wood they told me that you were buried. They also showed me some pieces of meat telling that a pig was killed to commemorate your death. That is why I threw away the wood on my way and rushed back home in full grief.”

With full of disappointment, Herakube said,

“Son, you have disobeyed me twice. Even if I died you should buried the wood in the grave with my dead body. Now I will die and you will never see me again. You will turn into a fox and your profession will be a thief. You shall kill whatever animals and fowls you get in the villages and jungle will be your home. Whosoever sees you will try to kill you.”

As soon as cursed by his father, Maiserung turned into a fox and went to the jungle. Simultaneously, Herakube also died. Even today, whenever a fox get chance uses to kill and eat both fowls and cattle that belong to people. Similarly, whenever people get chance to kill foxes they never spare them in order to protect their domestic animals and fowls.

7. Rehangbe

Once upon a time there was a very handsome man called Rehangbe. He was the only son of the family. So his parents loved him very much. He was a talented sportsman too. One day a girl from his village was going to marry to a man of his neighboring village. The two villages were connected by a narrow footpath only which led through a steep foothill and there was a witch lived on the top of the hill. Whenever any handsome and good-looking men like Rehangbe passed through that foot-hill she used to kidnap them.

It was the culture of the village that whenever there was marriage ceremony the marriage party used to drop bride to the bridegroom's house. Thereafter, they would make merrymaking, play different kinds of games, comedy and so on in the bridegroom's house.

When the day of the girl's wedding was approaching, boys and girls of her villagers and relatives were making preparation to drop her to the bridegroom's house. But they were disappointed to hear that Hehangbe's parents were not permitting him to accompany with the marriage party due to the fear that the witch might kidnap him on the way. According to their culture it was taboo for a child to disobey his/her parents. So, Hehangbe, even though he was so willing to accompany with his friends, could not do so since his parents did not permit him. However, there was one option. In any occasion when it concerned the affairs of village community, it was the duty of village elders to solve such a problem. So the village elders went to the house of Hehangbe and requested his parents to allow their son accompany with

the village youth. They promised that they would take responsibility for hi safely. As the village elders had assured them they finally gave their words. But before departure, they had advised Hehangbe never to respond to any call or look back when passing through the hill.

As feared by his parents, he heard a voice calling him when they were passing through the hill, but keeping the instruction of his parents in his mind he did not respond or look back to the call. In this way, they reached the groom's village safely. They played many games and sports and also played jokes and comedy. He won all the games and earned good name for his villagers.

Hearing the presence of Rehangbe in the wedding feast, the witch, in the form of a beautiful girl, went there and inquired about Rehangbe. But no one disclosed his identity to her. Because they feared that she might be a witch. But as the feast went on they all ate and drank to their full and, as they were drunk, forgot their promise which resulted to disclosing the identity of Hehangbe to their host friends and the witch.

The next day, early in the morning, they began their journey back home and the witch was following them without revealing her identity to anyone. When they were passing the foot-hill she began to call Rehangbe but he did not respond. She repeated calling him saying she was only one of his cousin sisters and asked him even to have a glance at her. So he peep backside through his armpit and as soon as he did it he vanished.

Realizing the disappearance of Rehangbe everyone in the party was stunned. They all searched for him in the jungle for several days. As the search went on, they saw smoke of fire on

the top of a hill. They rushed there and found his bangles and necklaces. So they waited for him. Finally, Rehangbe appeared and asked them the reason about their coming there. They told him that since the day of his disappearance they had been searching for him day and night. So they grasped him firmly and carried him on their shoulders toward the village. But after moving for several steps they found that they were carrying only a big stone. They found that he was standing behind them and said to them,

“My friends, you cannot bear me because now I am belonging to others. I am living in a land which is better than our village.”

But they grasped him and carried him again. After a few steps they found they were carrying a piece of log and he was standing behind them as before. He again said to them,

“If you are willing to talk and feast with me I shall come to our village after five days in the morning. So please arrange everything in my father’s house for me. I shall sit between my father and mother and tell a good thing for all of you on that day.”

After saying this he vanished. His villagers went back to their village and reported everything to his parents.

According to instruction of Hehangbe’s parents, the villagers prepared for a big feast on the fifth day and were curiously waiting for the arrival of Hehangbe. Suddenly, as promised, Hehangbe appeared from the east by a white cloud and sat between his father and mother. The villagers were excited. They did not want him to go away so they held him

tightly his hand, legs, head and so on without even letting him eat, drink or speak. He said to them,

“I do not have much time to spend with you. So please release me and enable me to eat the food and the drink you have prepared for me. Moreover, I bring to tell good news for all of you.”

But they did not listen. They did not even allow him to take the food and the drink but grasped him with their whole might. Suddenly, a white cloud from the east appeared and took him away. He never came back to visit them again thereafter.

8. How Rat Became Enemy of Man

In the beginning there lived a man and a woman who were supposed to be the first man and woman on earth. They were not wiser than any other animals. Just like animals they did not know how to cultivate land and produce crops. One day when they were roaming in the jungle, they saw a beautiful paddy plant full of ripen seed in the middle of a lake called 'Tangkwakzai' by the side of Nkuilongdi village. Seeing the fruits they were tempted to taste it. But they could not get it as it was growing in the middle of the lake and they did not know how to swim. So they went to a rat and said,

"Mr. Rat, we saw a beautiful plant with full of ripen fruits, but it is in the middle of a lake and we don't know how to swim. If you bring them to us, we shall share them equally."

Rat thought for awhile and then asked, "Where is it?"

"In the middle of Tangkwakzai lake," replied the man.

"I can't do it by myself. You need to help me," said the rat.

Both agreed to share them equally. So the man cut bamboo plants, joined them together into a long stick. He then pushed one end of it towards the rice plant and held the other end letting the rat climb along the bamboo stick. Likewise, the rat picked up the seeds and brought them to the man.

Since the paddy was only a handful, he said to the rat,

"I shall cultivate and grow these seeds this year and when it is time for harvest you may come and collect your share."

The rat agreed. So, the man cultivated rice and had a good harvest that year. At the time of harvest the rat also came to take his share which the man also gave him as agreed upon. But the rat apologetically said to him,

“My head is pointed, because of this I cannot carry heavy load. So would you carry home my share also? It would be ok for me if you give me little of my share each time you prepared food. I can be contented even with a little quantity of food if you can give me regularly.”

The man agreed to the suggestion of rat and thereafter he always fulfilled his words. But after many years, population of both the man and the rat had increased enormously. As a result, both the groups had established big villages. Among the people there grew up a strong and mighty family consisting of seven men. They were very proud and arrogant. They not only refused to give the share of rats but also asked other villagers not to give to them anymore. They warned the people as whoever was found giving anything to the rats in future shall be severely punished. Since the people were afraid to disobey them they stopped giving anything to the rats thenceforth.

Since men had stopped giving them their share of rice their leader convened a general meeting of all rats in a village of rats. In the meeting, he explained the ‘agreement between man and rat’ to all that were present. He addressed the gathering,

“Ladies and gentlemen, men of the present generation had broken the agreement that was made between our forefather and their forefather in the beginning of the world. Because of this all of us had suffered and the relation between men and rats had also strained. Today, in this meeting, we shall have to pass a resolution and submit it before men for their reconsideration. This is the only way to maintain peace between men and rats. I request everybody to give your good

suggestions so that we may discuss on the matter painstakingly.”

They spent the whole day considering various options, in case men refused to oblige their request. Finally, they resolved on three points:

1. We shall freely take not only rice but also whatever things men use as food.
2. We shall occasionally damage things which belong to men in future.
3. We shall destroy their crops completely this year and see what will be their reaction.

Accordingly, they submitted the memorandum to the men. When the memorandum was read to people, some men were sympathetic and were willing to part share of the rats as was practiced earlier. But some others were not agreeable to it. As there occurred two divisions of opinion the matter was referred to the strong family of seven mighty men. When the family members saw the memorandum of rats, they, instead of trying to negotiate, torn it into pieces and told the people to kill rats whenever they come to ask for their share.

The news reached the leader of the rats. He became furious and ordered all the rats to run away from men and carry out their plans according to the resolutions. When the time of harvest approached all the rats gathered in the corn fields of men and within one night they completely destroyed the crops.

In the beginning of the earth, man and rat lived together in one place as intimate friends; but when their population increased, the people became greedy and selfish. Thus, failing to keep the agreement made between their forefather and the forefather of rats. As a result of which rats became a great enemy to men even today.

9. Haiguing

Once upon a time, in Nnianning village, there lived a very brave and talented warrior named Hereumunherieng. He was good in every field, so his friends used to envy him.

One day, a misfortune struck him. His father passed away and in order to perform ritual to commemorate his father's death he requested some of his villagers to purchase a mithun. But, those villagers, instead of purchasing the animal, stealthily laid a trap and killed a big mithun that belonged to a neighboring Ntang village. They brought the stolen animal to him and collected its cost from him.

Ntang villagers came to know that one of their mithuns was killed and took away by one of their neighboring villages. The villagers sent some boys to trace the lost mithun. They went following the blood drops along the way which led to the house of Hereumunherieng. The boys then reported to the village council of Ntang village about the fact. They did not know that Hereumunherieng was deceived by his own villagers. Without verifying the reason first, the council hastily decided to take revenge on Hereumunherieng.

The following day, all the good warriors marched to the Hereumunherieng's village and called him out to come and meet them at the village gate. At that time, Hereumunherieng was mourning for his father's death by wearing an old cloth. Without knowing their intention he went out to meet them at the gate. As soon as he appeared, a warrior hurled spears at him and seven spears pierced through his body. After that, the Ntang warriors went back to their village.

Hereumunherieng did not die at the spot. He carried the seven spears on his body till his house and told his wife about

the man who hurled the spears at him. Hereumunherieng instructed his wife never let his son, Haiguing (who was just three months old at that time), do hard work; but should be loved and nurtured as much care as possible. After this he succumbed to his injury.

Haiguing lived with his mother as fatherless child, but for his sake his mother did not remarry. As he grew up, he built up friendship with many friends. One day, when he was playing with his friends, one of them told him that his father was killed by an enemy. He was curious to ascertain how far this information was true. So he frequently asked his mother about the death of his father, but she would never reveal the truth to him. She only used to tell him that his father died a natural death, because she feared that her son would try to take revenge on the man who killed his father.

When Haiguing was fully grown up he insisted his mother to tell him the truth about his father's death. Since he was already grown matured and was talented in understanding, and that no one was able to compete with him in all respects, not only in his village but even in neighboring villages, his mother had full confidence on him. His mother no longer could hide the fact so she plainly told him the true fact how his father was killed by one man from Ntang village. The person who killed his father used to wear a kilt adorned with four lines of cowries. He would always wear shield made up of bear's skin and with two spears in his hands. There was a scare mark on his chest.

Since Ntang man killed Hereumunherieng, the relation between the two villages had been strained. In order to reestablish good relation between the two villages, men of the two villages, Nnianning and Ntang, once, made a program to fish together in a river called Mbeiki.

Before the appointed day came, the village elders went to Haiguing and advised him that he should not take revenge on his father's killer, because the purpose of fishing together with the Ntang villagers was to rebuild the friendship and understanding between the two villages. Haiguing told them as, "No evil thing was to be done, but to catch the biggest fish on the appointed day".

On the appointed day, in the morning, Haiguing was lying outside his house restlessly as if he was suffering from severe stomach pain. His house was located near the street which led to the river, and all the people who passed by, saw him. Some of them inquired about his health if he were able to go for fishing. Haiguing's mother knew her son's plan and did not want to jeopardize it. So she told them that he was unwell so he might not be able to go with them to the river.

When all the people left for fishing, Haiguing sharpened his spear blade, covered it under his cloth and followed others to the river. All the men of Nnianning and Ntang had gone to fish together in the river by using fish poison made from a particular tree bark. There was a huge gathering as all the people from two villages met. The man who killed Haiguing's father was also in the midst of the people.

As soon as he reached the river he saw the crowd. He also could see the killer of his father, who was, as usual, wearing the kilt adorned with four lines of cowries and his shield with two spears in his hands. The man was not catching fish but was going here and there as if looking for someone.

Haiguing disguised himself as to be a foolish boy. He went towards the man with a basket which was fully torn at its bottom. He put fishes into the basket but the fishes could not remain there. Seeing that, the man went near him with some leaves, blocked the hole with the leaves and said,

“What a foolish boy!”

Haiguing caught a big fish, and as though he wanted to share the fish with him, asked the man to come and divide the fish. When the man was dividing the fish Haiguing took out his spear blade, stabbed him to death and pushed him into the river. He then yelled out,

“I have avenged for his father.”

His voice was so sharp and loud that it echoed seven hills as he yelled. He cried out loudly announcing that he had killed a big fish so the villagers of Nnianning and Ntang could return to their own respective villages. Announcing this he proceeded back home.

The villagers saw the dead body of the man floating in the river so they tried to fish it out; but could not, because it was going down deeper and deeper to the bottom of river pool. So they called back Haiguing.

Haiguing dived into the deep river and found that it was encircled by python at the bottom of the river pool. He cut the python into two pieces which caused blood spread all around on to the surface of water. When people saw it, they thought that he was killed by some water animals.

To their surprise, they later found the dead body in the river bank which was thrown out by Haiguing. They were waiting for Haiguing to kill him as soon as he emerged from the river, because he had broken the peace agreement between the two villages. But Haiguing cunningly emerged from a far distance and went straight home.

Behind Haiguing, there was great commotion among the villagers of Nnianning. All the village elders said that Haiguing must be killed by all means, but the youth openly came out one after another opposing the elders. They, one after

another, followed Haiguing to the village. So the elders could not do anything without the support of the youth.

A few years after, Haiguing got married with a loving and talented woman. She loved her husband so dearly that she always cared even for his food and drink. Now and then, she would go to the river in search of water insects, because they were her husband's favorite menu.

Soon after their marriage they were blessed with a baby boy. Haiguing also loved his wife very much but wanted to test her efficiency. One morning, he spread a big basket of paddy on the ground as if done by mistake. His wife, without grumbling, cleaned them up nicely and was still able to go to the field in time along with other friends. The next morning also he dropped a big basket of millet on the floor as if done by mistake and went to the field. She patiently collected them nicely without murmuring and yet, like previous occasion, was able to go to the field on time along with her friends.

One occasion, when she was searching for insects and fishes in the river for her husband, water leech entered her vaginal cavity and remained there. Slowly, the number of water leech increased and as a result of which she became weaker and weaker; because they had sucked so much of her blood. But she was feeling shy to tell her husband. Observing her weakness Haiguing inquired about her health but she would only say that she was alright. Days passed by and she became bad to worse, so she revealed the actual fact of her health. He then killed a hen and cooked it in an earthen pot. He removed the meat and asked her to keep the pot between her thighs so as to enable the steam enter inside her vaginal tract. As soon as she did, the leeches came out and filled the pot. But his wife died.

Haiguing possessed the power to meet the Spirit of the death. Soon after his wife died he went to the land of the dead and was waiting in to meet his wife. She came out and told Haiguing go back home, because there was one thing to be taken care of urgently. He obeyed his wife and he went back home he found their son lying dead. His grief was inconsolable. He mourned for them seven years and lay on the bed all throughout. His wife was expert in weaving so she left him with seven blankets during the short period of their family life. He never came out of his house but most of the time he wept on his bed thinking of his wife and the child so all the clothes became old and worn-out. He did not cut his hair for all the seven long years so it grew long and reached his heels.

Once a mother bear with her two cubs came and settled down on a thorny tree at the gate of their village. The villagers could not pass through the gate because the mother bear was very ferocious and tended to attack whosoever passed through. No one had the courage to chase away the bears or kill them. So the villagers requested Haiguing to do something. But Haiguing was unhappy with the villagers, because they were always jealous of the many talents he had and even willing to destroy him. So he refused to oblige them. At last, a group of old women came to Haiguing and said,

“Wild animals came and lived in the village, yet no man in the village is able to do anything. It is very disgraceful and shameful, especially an able man like you.”

This touched him so deeply. He covered his head with a piece of white cloth and went to the tree. When he looked up he saw the bear with her two cubs. He did not care for the thorns of the tree, climbed up towards the bears with a spear and challenged the ferocious bears to come out. One by one, all the bears came out and he thrust them to dead with his

spear. Hearing the news, the villagers rushed out to see the dead bears and to divide their meat. According to Zeme tradition, the killer would get the largest portion of meat. The one who arrived first would get less meat than the killer, but more than others and the last one would get the least share. So the people quarreled among themselves to get more meat. When Haiguing heard the noise of the people he told them that the liver belonged to his mother-in-law. When she heard it she laughed and showed her teeth. Because her mood was always bad that she never showed her smiling face nor did her teeth to anyone before.

While Haiguing was climbing down the tree his head cover fell off and his hair was too long that it reached his foot. There were seven divorced women looking at him and each one imagined that he might marry her. They loved him very much that they used to follow him wherever he went and did not cultivate land that year. He did not marry any one of them so they decided to kill him by transforming themselves into tigress. They turned into tigress and tried to devour him but failed. In one occasion when Haiguing was passing through his way to a field the seven tigresses sat on the branch of a tree and sang a song,

“About to die when we remember Haiguing.”

One day, Haiguing’s mother was going to the field and on the way the seven tigresses met her and killed her. The news reached Haiguing who immediately took a spear and ran after them. He killed all of them and brought home the dead body of his mother.

One night, Haiguing went to a morung to drink rice beer with his friends. On his way, he met a group of boys belonging to Angami tribe. These boys heard the rumor about the popularity of Haiguing, so they went to see his glory. When

they met in the morung they greeted each other. The boys looked at him carefully and when they saw his physical stature they were rather disappointed. After finishing his cup Haiguing jumped across the beam of the house. Seeing that, the visitors were amazed. The other friends in the village narrated to them about the achievements of Haiguing. Then they also said,

“Ulie Haigui lie, Haigui ketho lie” (means yes Haiguing, what we heard about him is true).

When the visitors were returning to their village they repeated the name of Haiguing as “Haigui, Haigui” fearing that they might forget his name. But when they were crossing an old bridge it broke and all of them fell into the river. Then they forgot his name and no one could remember it. When they were struggling to remember his name, a flock of birds flew over them producing sound like “gu gu gu.” Then they said “u lie Haigui lie,” (yes his name is Haiguing).

In the meantime, the victim of Haiguing had two sons who were constantly watching over him to take revenge. Haiguing usually used to sleep in the morung with his friends. One night, those two sons came in the morung and were hiding to kill Haiguing. He went to the morung and had a nice drink. After which he went out to discharge urine. When he was returning inside, one of them thrust his spear on his back. Haiguing called his friends and requested them to remove the thorn from his back. But his friends always envied him and were jealous of him; so instead of removing the spear, they thrust forcefully inside several times and killed him. Even after his death the villagers never revealed it to the people for seven years fearing that someone who loved Haiguing might avenge them.

10. The Python Man

Once upon a time, there was a couple who cultivated rice nearby a lake one year. When the crops were becoming matured, birds and animals used to come and destroy the crops. One day, when they were chasing away birds and animals by shouting and pelting stones at them they saw a very handsome young man near the edge of their field going towards the lake. He was extraordinarily handsome and appeared to be different from any other normal young man. Out of curiosity, they hid themselves and followed him. On reaching the lake, the man turned into a python and went inside the water.

The next day, it happened to be the day of rest for all the parents for some religious observation in the village. The couple had a beautiful daughter and since children were not restricted to go outside the village they sent her to chase away birds and animals in their field. But they were worried because their daughter could be either harmed or lured by the python-man. So, they let their dog accompany her and advised her to be careful and never go near the edge of the field.

When she was working and chasing the birds away from their field pelting stones at them, the python-man emerged and went to her. As he was extraordinarily handsome and charming she fell in love with him. They spent the whole day together that day. The next day also, the girl requested her parents to let her go to the field and work. This happened for many days and her parents started doubting of her sudden interest in going to the field. So one day, her parents went to the field behind her and found out that she was with the python-man. They knew

that they would never be able to stop her. The only way they could was to kill the python-man. They crushed a poison beans and prepared a very strong poisonous wine. The next day, before she went to the field, they gave her a pot of poisonous beer along with her jar that contained beer for her. They then told her to give the pot to her friend saying it was a special beer for special person. She went to the field and served him wine from the pot. As before, they spent together the whole day.

The following day, the girl went to the field and waited for him, but he did not come. She went around the field, shouting and throwing stones, but there was no sign of him. She searched for him everywhere and followed the path from where he came everyday. The path led her to the lake. Thinking that he might have been drowned, she threw her dog into the water saying,

“If my lover be in the water, you will come out without getting wet.”

After awhile, the dog came out completely dry. So, she dived into the water and went down to the bottom of the lake. There she saw a big palace which was glowing brightly. As she entered inside the palace she met her lover’s parents and inquired about him. Coming to know that they were the parents of her lover, she introduced herself to them and wept. She told them how passionately they loved each other and the reason as to why she came in search of him. She even told his parents that she was willing to marry him. They were very happy to hear that, but told that he was sick and unable to move freely because his belly was swollen. Anyway, they let her go and see her lover. His parents comforted her promising to fulfill her wish to marry their son. In addition, they also

gave her many ornaments and dressed her up with fine apparels and sent her home. Dressing up like a princess, the girl went back home and told her parents everything.

Words about the girl soon spread out in the village like a wild-fire. There was a couple of their neighbor who also had a daughter of the same age. This couple was very greedy. They wanted to do the same way with their daughter so that she might also bring to them the treasures as the beautiful girl of their neighbor had done. So they went in search of snake. First, they caught one which was the size of a man's arm. They thought it was too small, so they let it go. They found another one which was the size of a man's leg, but it did not satisfy them so they let it again go. Finally, they found a very huge python and were satisfied. They captured it and brought the python home.

They kept the python in the granary and called their daughter, who was at that time playing with her friends, to go inside the granary and take out some paddy for husking. As instructed, she went inside the granary, but soon came out screaming there was a python. The angry parents forcefully pushed her inside again and locked the door. The python bit the girl and she screamed in pain, but her parents happily spoke to each other,

“They must be courting and wooing for each other.”

The python then curled round her body and tickled her with its tail. They heard her giggling and laughing so they again said,

“She must have convinced the python to give her ornaments and dresses.” However, the poor girl was swallowed by python soon after.

After a long silence, her parents banged the door and called her, but she did not respond. They opened the door and saw the python lying still with a big belly. They realized that they had committed a grave mistake. They shouted for help, called their relatives and told that a python had swallowed their daughter. The relatives came and killed the python. They ripped open its belly, screaming in anger; but they found only the bangles, the necklace and the hair of the girl.

11. The Seven Orphans

Long, long ago there lived seven orphans who were brothers. Their parents died when they were still very young. They grew up themselves, cultivating vegetables as there was no one to look after them.

One year, they planted chilly but a deer ravaged and destroyed their field time and again. Thus, all their hard work and labour went in vain. So, they decided to hunt down the deer. They went in search of the deer, but it evaded and deceived them because it was actually a spirit. It suddenly appeared out of nowhere and quickly disappeared again when they tried to kill it. In that manner, they were led very far away from home. In the evening, they came across an abandoned field where there was an empty hut. Since it was already evening they decided to rest for the night there. When it was time to sleep, they heard some women singing and coming towards them. As they looked at them closely they found that there were seven of them. They were actually fairies, but the brothers took them to be from nearby village.

The fairies asked the brothers as to why they were there. So they told their story. Then the fairies also told them that they were sisters. They went singing to the beautiful plains and hills, but lost their way back, so they came to the hut. After recounting their exhausting and eventful day, they decided to retire to bed. The fairies suggested sleep in pairs according to their age which the brothers also agreed to. Accordingly they retired to bed.

The older pairs were restless and feared to get close to one another, but the youngest siblings fell in love and began

confiding on each other. In course of their conversation, the girl gave the boy a knife and a conch, and said,

“Tomorrow, as we go separate ways, a big net will come down from the sky and trap all of you. Use this knife and free yourselves. And whenever you blow the conch, I shall come to you.”

The following day, as the brothers were on their way back home, a very big net came down from the sky and trapped them. The panic-stricken brothers scrambled and struggled to free themselves, but the youngest brother told them to calm down. He freed all of them by cutting open the net with his knife and they reached their home safely. The older brothers, out of their gratitude, did not let their youngest brother go to the field. They let him stay at home and look after their house.

The conch given by the fairy girl was so magical that whenever he blew it his girl friend would come. So whenever his elder brothers went to the field, he would blow the conch and call the girl. In this way they would spend the day together in his house and she would go back to her own abode before the brothers arrived in the evening.

One day an old woman saw them and reported it to his brothers. The brothers were so happy to know that their youngest brother had a girl friend and were so curious to see her. One day, they pretended to go to the field, but stayed back and hid themselves. As usual, their brother came out of their house and blew his conch and then a girl came to him. Out of excitement, they all ran to the two and expressed their happiness. The girl was so embarrassed that she sprinkled some water upon them and disappeared. As a result, the

brothers turned into stone pillars and the youngest orphan was left alone.

The orphan blew his conch everyday, but the girl stopped coming to him. One day, as he was blowing the conch, hoping that the girl would come, a man came selling a hammer. The man asked him if he would like to exchange the hammer with his conch which sounds very beautiful. He said that his hammer can do anything what its master commands. The orphan agreed and took the hammer, but he wanted to see whether it would obey him, so he commanded to go and strike the man dead. The hammer did as it was commanded and he took his conch back.

He continued blowing the conch. When he was blowing the conch, another man came selling a rope. The man liked the sound of the conch and asked for it in exchange for his rope. He also said that the rope could do anything what its master commanded. The orphan took the rope and said, "Tie the man and strike him to dead." The rope tied the man and the hammer stroke him to dead and he got his conch back.

Still another man came selling a spear as the orphan was blowing the conch. In the same manner he got the hammer and the rope, he got the spear too. The rope tied the man and the spear pierced his heart, and the orphan got his conch back.

Taking the hammer, the rope, the spear and the conch, the orphan decided to go to the fairy's abode to meet his lover. After walking for many days, he reached the gate of the fairy's abode which was guarded by two huge buffaloes and not even a fly could pass through it. He gave his command, and the rope tied the buffaloes and the hammer struck them to dead.

He went inside, but there was another gate guarded by two ferocious tigers. He commanded the rope and the hammer again, and they got rid of the tigers. But, he faced yet another obstacle. There were huge metal wheels that were rotating and ready to cut anyone into pieces whoever passed through them. He commanded the spear, and it went and jammed the wheel in between.

The orphan went inside and met his lover. He fervently requested her to come back and spend the time together with him. The girl obliged and they both went back to his house. The girl then sprinkled some water on the stone pillars and the six brothers came back to life. After which the youngest orphan married the girl and the all brothers lived happily together ever after.

12. Npeube

Long ago, there lived a boy named Npeube. He was a bizarre looking boy with his body and limbs very small whereas his head was unusually big. Except for the abnormality, he was hale and hearty and grew up without any complications.

One day, his friends went to the forest to dig moles and find food for a festival. Npeube wanted to go too but his friends did not want to mingle with him for his abnormal stature and they left without him.

He cut and sharpened a stick to dig moles. He held it in his mouth and tumbled down the road. Nearby the road, he heard a mole gnawing and chewing the root of a tree. He dug the ground and caught a white mole.

Feeling very happy, he speaks to himself that he thought he will not be able to contribute anything to the morung but now he had also dug his own share. To his surprise the mole started requesting him not to kill him and promise to find a wife for him. Npeube protested that he never heard of a mole that finds a wife for man but the mole pleaded Npeube to trust him and said that he will not go back on his word. He also said that he would talk to the king and let him marry his daughter. Npeube therefore released the mole and went home.

That night the mole went to the king's palace while he was having gathering with his family. He called the king and said,

“Oh King, you must let your daughter marry Npeube, or else you and your family members will be plagued with diseases and wiped out.”

The king was greatly dismayed, because he did not want his daughter to marry Npeube. But his daughter said that she would rather marry Npeube than watch their family being wiped out.

The next day, the king went and told Npeube's father that he would let his daughter marry Npeube. Npeube's father could not believe his ears; he thought he was being mocked for begetting an abnormal child, but the king told that he was serious. Npeube and the king's daughter were married the following day. Although Npeube was physically abnormal, his wife loved him and took great care of him.

One day, all the villagers decided to go fishing. Npeube wanted to go too, but thinking of his wellbeing, his wife and his mother stopped him. But he would not listen and ran away. Npeube was able to collect two baskets of fishes and as he was returning home, he saw *Herahemiepu* (a woman with supernatural powers) coming towards him. He was frightened and quickly hid himself behind a stone. The woman saw the fishes and asked,

"Whose fishes are these? I want to eat them."

Npeube timidly replied,

"Mine, you may have them if you like to."

She took the fishes and again asked,

"Why are you hiding?"

"Because I was scared," replied Npeube.

The woman looked at him and found that he was abnormal and since he was kind enough to let her eat his fishes, she decided to help him. She placed him in a very big stone and told him not to be scared, but lay very still. Then, from the east, a very strong windstorm came gushing and lifted him. He

fell and hit the rock violently and the torso of a fully grown man was formed. He was lifted and thrown down against the rock several times, and each time he fell; his limbs were formed one by one. Finally, he was pulled up by the hair and his old dresses and skin were shed, and he was transformed into a very handsome man.

Npeube happily carried the baskets filled with fishes and returned home. On his way, he met his wife who came looking for him but she could not recognize him. He told her that he was her husband but she did not believe him. So he convinced her by telling about their home and what he ate in the morning before he went away. Then only she got convinced that it was Npeube, her husband. He explained to her about *Herahemiepui* and about his transformation and everything that happened. They went home and lived happily ever after.

13. Asa

Scene-i: Asa's childhood days.

Long ago there lived a good warrior called Maica in a village. Maica took wife and after a few months his wife got pregnant. Before the baby was born, his king called him to his palace and ordered him to attack and conquer Hepumme, another kingdom. The king of Hepumme had a rare kind of bird called *ruiswapoinakeda* which had two heads and the king of Maica was fascinated to possess it. So he ordered Maica to conquer that kingdom and bring the bird to him.

Maica was appalled for he knew that his wife would face many problems if he died in the war because she was already conceiving a baby. But at the same time, it was not possible for him to disobey the king. So he made a top, a bow with arrows and toys for his child to play with them during his childhood. He told his wife to name the baby Asa, in case she gave birth to a son. Maica foretold his wife,

“If I died in the war, my dead body can be found five hundred measures⁴ away from others”.

He instructed his wife to take the king's bowl when she gave birth. After that he bade goodbye to his wife and left for the war.

Asa remained in his mother's womb for thirteen months. He used to talk to his mother when he was still in his mother's womb. One day, he asked his mother to pack more rice and

⁴ One measure is full spread length of chest and arms from the tip of long finger to the other end tip of the finger.

less wine for her field lunch, for there would be heavy rain that day. But she scorned,

“A baby cannot discern the weather when still in the womb”.

So she took a big bottle of wine and a small quantity of rice for her lunch and went to the field. There was heavy rain on that day so she did not feel thirsty but felt hungry and returned home starving. The next day, the baby again told his mother that there would be no rain so she should bring more wine and less food for her lunch. But this time too she did the opposite because she suffered hunger the previous day. But indeed, that day happened to be very sunny and scorching. She felt very thirsty; but since she did not listen to her son in her womb she could not quench her thirst with the little wine she brought with her and out of thirst she could not even eat.

A few days later, travail came to her and her child started talking and asking her to bring the king's bowl as instructed her by his father before he left for the war. He said that he would come down by himself as and when she brought the bowl of the king. Moreover, he warned that till she brought the bowl he would never come out from her womb. When his mother brought the king's bowl, Asa told her not to take trouble forcing him out. He would come out by himself.

As soon as he came out of his mother's womb he asked his mother's dress which she was wearing at the time of giving birth. His mother was surprised, but gave him whatever things he asked. With the cloth and the top made for him by his father, Asa went to the lake of the king. He saw many people playing tops there. He asked the players play properly, otherwise, better stop playing. He then entered at the bottom of the lake, took bath, washed the clothes, came out from the lake

and played his top with other players. He won the game and received a lot of money. He took the money to his mother and with that they purchased all of their needs.

One day when he was playing top, by mistake, it hit the palace of the king. Then the king shouted,

“Who hit my palace? I will break his limbs and put them into his mouth.”

Asa immediately ran to his mother and told about the incidence. His mother told him that the palace belonged to the king and he might be able to do whatever he had said, so he should not repeat it again in future.

After a few months, by mistake, Asa again hit the door of the palace. The king felt angry and uttered words worse than before. Asa was frighten and ran home again. The king inquired about the boy and the people told him that he was Asa who possessed some spiritual gifts. The king kept quiet and thereafter he regarded the boy extraordinary.

Scene-ii: Asa encountered with the king

Asa visited the king and asked, if there was any able person in his kingdom who could avenge on their enemies whether the king would provide rice to them or not. The king replied,

“If there were such a person I would let him take the biggest barn of paddy from my granary.”

Asa went to the king’s barn, and with the help of his magical power, he put the entire paddy in a small sack and went home. The king saw Asa with a small sack on his back, so he thought that Asa took only little amount of paddy. So he asked poor people in his kingdom to come and take the left

over paddy. The poor people came to divide paddies from the barn but found it empty. There were only few pieces of paddy and two rodents were playing and asking each other inside the barn to take the paddy. The poor people reported to the king whatever they saw. Then the king told that if it were true he could do nothing.

The following day, Asa went to the king again and asked, if there were some people who could avenge their enemies whether he would supply meat to them or not. The king replied that if such people were available they could go to the herd of his elephants and kill the biggest one. He thought that if Asa went near the elephant he would be killed by the elephant. But it was not so; Asa went to the biggest elephant and caught hold of the two tusks firmly, shook it and the elephant died instantaneously. With the help of his magical power he put the whole meat into a small basket and took it home. The king saw Asa and was surprised to see him returning home without any harm. The people told the king that Asa took only a little meat of elephant to his house. So the king told them to divide among themselves the left over elephant meat. So the poor people happily went to divide the meat; but to their utter surprised, they could see only blood stain. The people returned empty handed and reported to the king about the things happened.

Scene-iii: Asa's preparation to avenge his father's enemy

Asa gave the rice to the wives of those who died in the war and asked them to cook food and also prepare beer with it according to their preference either cold or warm, soft or hard. He also distributed the meat to them to prepare in such a way that their husbands might like to eat.

The following day, he called all those widows to bring food and drink they had prepared. The widows did as told. But the quantity became too much that the space in his house was not sufficient to keep them all. So with his magical power, he put all the food in a small tiffin-box and the beer in a small gourd. He then ready to avenge the enemy with the food and the beer gathered from the widows. But before he set out his war expedition he went to the king and foretold him as,

“On the day of my return some people will either cry or laugh or beat drum, dance or sing or yell. But whatever happened, you should, by no means, get down from the throne. If you did so you would be stepped down from the throne forever.”

When he reached the battle-field, he found that there were full of bones of his people. He tried to identify the bones of his father, but could not. So he went about five hundred measure further away from the battle-field. There, he found the bones of his father, Maica. He took few leaves and fanned the bones. The bones then joined themselves, then the flesh appeared, and then blood and the skin which became a living soul. His father sneezed and said that he was sleeping. But Asa told him that he was not sleeping. He died long ago but with his help he only came back to life. But his father did not believe it. So Asa brought him to the place where a great army died long back and full of their dried bones. He fanned the dried bones with leaves as before, then there was a great noise and behold, it shook the earth. Bones came to join, sinews and flesh came up upon them; finally the skin covered them. Then the dead warriors resurrected. They all stood up on their feet which became an exceedingly great army, each of them sneezed and uttered that he had been sleeping. None of them thought that

he was dead. Seeing all that, Asa's father realized that all those warriors as well died long back.

Asa asked them whether they would like to take food first or drinks. They saw only a small lunch-box and a small bottle of wine. So they said,

“We can neither be satisfied our hunger nor quenched our thirst with these food and wine.”

But Asa convinced them saying they were prepared and sent by their respective wives. With plantain leaves, they made plates and cups. Asa offered them food and drinks and all of them had their full, but still a lot of food and drinks remained. After this, Asa told them that they were going to attack Hepumme and asked to see the omen he was going to show. He foretold,

“We will win the battle if I cut off this large ‘mrim’ tree with one stroke; but if I failed, we are going to be defeated.”

With his magic power he cut off the mrim tree with one stroke. He made a log with it, bored a hole and then put all the warriors inside the hole. He carried the log on his shoulder and proceeded to the village of Hepumme. When he reached the gate, he put down the log to the ground and shouted at them to give ruiswapoinakeda. He warned as he would destroy the village if they refused to part it to him. Hearing his shout, the king of Heppumme felt insulted. He sent many young men to attack Asa, but when they went near him, he lifted up the log and rolled it down and killed all of them. Then Asa shouted at the king again to hand over the ruiswapoinakeda to him warning if refused he would destroy the village. The king again sent the best warriors, but when the warriors went near him, he did the same and smashed down all of them. The king

did not give up. He called the goddess of the village for help which she agreed. She went and stood on the log of Asa to fight against him for the king. She fought with her full might, but was no match for her opponent. Asa killed her with his log without much effort. After this the king had no other option but to surrender and handed over the ruiswapoinakeda to Asa.

When Asa and the other warriors were returning home with ruiswapoinakeda, on the way, some people cried, laughed, beat drums and danced, yelled and sang songs. Hearing the news that Asa was returning with the army the king went out to welcome them on the way. When Asa met the king he reminded him that he should not get down from the throne. But the king said that Asa should reign in his place. As the king was insisting, Asa, instead of accepting the offer, preferred his father Maica, which the king also agreed. Accordingly, Maica ascended the throne.

Asa restarted feeding the breast of his mother and that continued for a month. Since he was already grown to a great warrior his mother could no more withstand feeding her son with her breast. She became weaker and weaker and was about to die. Then Asa said his course of breast feeding was over and he would feed his mother in return. He fed his mother with half piece of rice at first and increased it day by day in order to balance her diet. He asked his mother whether she had regained the strength of her youth. Initially, she would say that her whole strength was not yet recovered, but as it went on, she later said that she was much stronger than the strength of her youth.

Scene-iv: Asa and Maiserung found a mother

One day, Asa told his parents that he would like to go on a pilgrimage and visit different places. But his parents did not agree to it, because they wanted him to remain with them as a prince and lived in a comfortable life. Asa comforted his parents saying he would come back soon and set off for his journey. He went to a foothill and when he was climbing up on it he met a stranger named Maiserung who was going down from the top of the same hill. They inquired about each other's name and purposes of their journey. Maiserung said that he was looking for a woman to be his mother. After discussing for awhile, both agreed to have a common mother and began to search for any woman in the jungle. As they went on searching, they saw an old woman trapped in a basket and was washed away by running rain water. They caught hold of the basket and asked the woman to be their mother. She responded saying she was already old and it would be a great burden for them to take care of her. But they promised to take care of her and so they set up a house and lived together there.

They cultivated rice and vegetable in the jungle. Turn by turn, Asa and Maiserung stayed at home and looked after their mother, while the other worked in the field. Asa was careful and affectionate, but Maiserung was the opposite. He was notorious and mischievous. Asa was also conversant, so whenever he stayed at home he used to give their mother company and conversed with her on various matters. Not only that, he used to prepare food and served her good food and drink on time. On the contrary, when Maiserung stayed with her, she never ate proper food and drank proper drink. The food Maiserung served her was never cooked properly and that too, never on time. Many a time, she suffered thirst and hunger when Maiserung stayed with her.

One day, Maiserung boiled a big kettle of water and poured it into his mother's mouth when it was still very hot and injured her mouth very badly. So she could not swallow food and as a result of which she became very weak. On the same day, when Asa was cleaning weeds in their *jhum* field, by mistake, he displaced a stone which hurriedly rolled down below the field. Then he heard a woman's voice from that direction which said that her son's head was hit and was broken by the rolling stone. Asa was alarmed and he rushed home.

When he reached home he found that their mother's mouth was badly burned. He scolded Maiserung for his mischievous act and advised him not to repeat such an act in future. Asa also told him there lived a witch and her family below their field. He related the incident to Maiserung and advised him never to roll down any stone in the field because it might hit anyone of their family members.

Maiserung and the Witch

Maiserung was imagining on his bed about the incident what Asa told him and became so anxious. He could not control his anxiety and mischievous nature. So he rose up early in the morning, took the biggest basket to go to their field. At the village gate, he collected basket full of stones and went to the field. He then rolled down the stones from the location where Asa did the previous day. Seeing many stones rolling down towards them the witch became very angry. She shouted at Maiserung saying her son's head was already broken. She went up to Maiserung to eat him up. Then Maiserung challenged her to wrestle. He challenged the witch as whosoever was defeated would be eaten. But before Maiserung was ready the witch went straight to him, wrestled with him

and pulled him down. She screamed saying that she would eat him up. Maiserung accepted the defeat, but said as according to the tradition they should wrestle two times which she also agreed. The second time Maiserung held the witch firmly with his whole might and put her upside down into his basket. He pressed her down to the bottom of the basket with his hands and feet. Likewise, he bounded her in his basket and was taking her to his house.

On the way, they heard the moo of a mithun. The witch asked,

“What does it mean?”

Maiserung replied that after he ate her up and discharged his excreta the soil would become fertile; then the grass would become healthy and grow faster. Thus the mithun was thinking that he would enjoy eating the grass. Imaging such a joyful feast the mithun was mooing.” The witch sorrowfully wept.

After sometime, a dog barked and she asked,

“What does it mean?”

Maiserung told that the dog did a joyful noise thinking that the time was very near to enjoy his stool. After eating her flesh his excreta would be much tastier. The witch cried bitterly.

Then a cock crowed, “cock-a-doodle-doo”. The witch again asked,

“What does it mean?”

Maiserung replied the same answer as before. The witch pleaded him to free her promising to give a magic stone. She said,

“If you put it into your mouth you would never feel hungry or thirsty.”

Maiserung was tempted to own such a magic stone so he agreed to release her if she was to give the stone to him. The witch vomited out several stones but Maiserung said that they were not the magic stone. At last, the witch vomited out the real magic stone which was white in color. He took the magic stone and put it immediately into his mouth. Then he freed the witch. Even today, this field is called “Asa-luh” which is situated in Zeme area in Assam.

Maiserung never felt hungry or thirsty after getting the magic stone. So he did not return home thereafter, but spent days and nights in the boy’s morung. Observing the strange behavior of Maiserung, Asa made a plan. He collected a kind of tree bark which was very slippery. He smeared it on the ladder of the morung by which Maiserung used to go. He then called Maiserung loudly from outside informing as their mother had passed away. When Maiserung heard it he rushed out and when he put his feet on the stairs he fell down badly and dropped the magic stone from his mouth. They searched for the stone, but could not find it for sometimes. As they went on searching here and there, Asa found it finally and immediately put it into his mouth. Maiserung requested him to divide it into two so that they could share. They kept it on a chopping-board and chopped the magic stone into two pieces: one piece moved southwards and the other northwards. Both the pieces went back to the witch. A dog licked the chopping-board so there was a saying “Dog never dies due to starvation.”

After the death of Asa and Maiserung's mother

After a long period of sickness their mother died. Nearby their house was a big sugarcane plantation and they wanted to own that field. In order to dissemble the owner of the field they took the dead body of their mother to the middle of the field and lay her there. After which they cunningly put head-band of carrying basket on her head and basket on her back with a walking stick in her hand. They also put a piece of sugarcane in her mouth as though she was holding one end with her hand and a few pieces of eaten sugarcane near her feet.

On their return home they informed the villagers that their mother was missing and in whose house or field was found their mother, the house or field would be confiscated. They searched all the houses in the village but could not find her so they began the search in the fields. At last, they found the dead body of their mother in the middle of the sugarcane field. The owner of the field could not deny so they confiscated the field.

Next, they schemed to deceive villagers. They made a nice basket, removed the skin of their mother carefully, stitched the skin into a human shape and put some soft matters inside the skin so that it gave appearance of a human body. The skin was then anointed with the juice of sugarcane. The height of the structure was made pliable enough to enable it contracted and elongated like a spring. They pressed down the structure into the bottom of the basket and put a plate full of hot chilly-powder on top of it, fixed the lid of the basket and sealed it securely. After that, they decorated the basket nicely which looked attractive and enticing in appearance. They arranged them in such a way that as soon as they removed the lid of the

basket the structure sprang up suddenly and spread the chilly-powder around the people standing nearby.

They set off their journey to the neighboring villages to sell the basket. They told the people that the basket was magical which contained full of valuable treasures and worth the cost of one mithun. In order to get all the treasures in the basket it could only be opened after five days of its purchase, otherwise all that contained in the basket would be vanished. Furthermore, the basket should be opened only in the middle of the village where all the villagers could gather round and watch the basket opened. Before opening the basket all the people must come and stand round it. Thereafter, they must be fenced round with thorn and then make a big fire round behind the fencing. When removing the lid, all the people who were standing round the basket must open their eyes as wide as possible: nothing should block their eyes from the object. What they told were so convincing and the villagers were so curious to see the treasures in the basket that they, without a second thought, exchanged the basket with a large mithun.

After five days, as instructed by Asa and Maiserung, they brought the basket to the middle of the village where there was enough space for the villagers to stand round the basket. They made fencing of thorn around them and made a big fire behind round the fencing. All the people surrounded the basket, each opening the eyes as wide as one could, expecting something miracle to happen. But as soon as they removed the lid there sprang up a human figure holding a wooden dao and spattered the chilly-powder everywhere which entered into the eyes of all present. Due to pain they could not open their eyes. They ran hither and thither pushing each other. Some were hurt by the thorns and some others got burned in the fire. In this way they all succumbed to death.

Scene-v: Asa and Maiserung Separated

Asa and Maiserung kept the mithun for a few months and then killed it in remembrance of their mother. They lived in separate houses. So they divided the meat equally to be taken to their respective houses. After Maiserung took his share, he stood up, turned his back facing Asa and when he was about to take steps, Asa said,

“Maiserung, tonight our mother is willing to ask meat from us.”

“What time?” Maiserung asked.

“May be at mid-night,” said Asa.

At night, Asa disguised himself and put his hand inside the house of Maiserung through the window and said,

“Maiserung, zen ne ge!” (Maiserung give me meat).

Maiserung gave a big piece of meat and Asa took it to his house and repeated the same thing throughout the night. Maiserung gave away all the meat that night and the next morning he had no meat to eat.

Maiserung wanted to know whether their mother asked meat from Asa also or not. So early in the morning, he went to Asa. Seeing plenty of meat in Asa’s house, he realized that Asa had tricked him. He thought of doing tit-for tat to Asa to get back his meat. He said,

“Tonight, our mother is going to ask meat again from us.”

So when it was dark he went to Asa and asked for meat,

“Asa, zen ne ge!”

Asa cut a tiny piece of meat and gave it to him. They repeated the same thing the whole night. But Maiserung could not get back even half of his meat.

After some years both of them took wife. Like them, Asa's wife was clever but Maiserung's wife was slow-witted. Once, Asa told his wife something and went to the field of Job's tear. He spread fermented Soya bean all over his body, shake the stem of Job's tear letting its flower fall upon him. After which, he lay in the field as if died. A group of monkeys found him who thought he was dead. So they took his body to his house in the village. Asa's wife pretended to cry and sealed off all the doors and windows. Then she brought a sharp dao and put it in her husband's hand saying her husband might need it in the village of dead persons. As soon as he got the dao, he rose up and killed all the monkeys with his dao.

The next day, Maiserung visited Asa and found that his house was full of monkey meat, so he asked Asa how he managed to kill so many monkeys. Asa began to narrate but before he could finish narrating Maiserung said, "enough, enough, I know it," and ran away.

Asa tried to stop him but Maiserung did not listen. Maiserung did not even inform anything his wife, but went straight to the field of Job's tear. He did the same to him as Asa did and was lying in the field like a dead man. A group of monkeys came there and saw Maiserung. They thought that he was dead, so they called their other friends and took him to his house. They put him on his bed and mourned for him. His wife also thought that her husband was really dead so she wept with the monkeys. Maiserung whispered to her "A Kie" (meaning my dao). But she did not understand what he was asking for. Maiserung then shouted "A Kie." Then all the monkeys ran

away except a small one which was unable to climb over the fencing of their house compound. The small monkey requested,

“Uncle, please help me to cross the fencing.”

But Maiserung replied,

“All the other monkeys had sped away. Why should I let you do the same?” Uttering this, he killed the small monkey.

After a few years Asa went to a place with a big basket on his back where many monkeys lived. Some monkeys saw him and asked,

“Uncle, where are you going?”

“I am going to the forest to collect Nzamtsi⁵. Whosoever want to eat it may come with me.” he invited.

So many young monkeys followed him. When they reached the tree he told them to climb up and eat any amount they might want. In the mean time he was busy making a mallet to kill them when they climbed down from the tree. Some of the monkeys saw him and asked what he was doing. Asa replied that he was making step for them so that they might easily climb down. He asked them to climb down turn by turn with their eyes closed. After they had their full, they followed his instruction and climbed down one by one with their eyes closed. Asa killed all of them and put them in his big basket.

Asa covered their dead bodies with plantain leaves and put nzamtsi on top of them in the basket. When he was returning home, on his way, the monkeys inquired about their children. He told them that they were collecting fruits for their parents,

⁵ Nzamtsi is a kind of edible fruit of a gooseberry size, black in color when ripped.

and that they would come a little later. He also asked them to taste nzamtsi from his basket if they wanted. But they said that they would eat only after their children returned. Then Asa went away hurriedly home.

When Maiserung went to Asa's house he again saw plenty of monkey meat. So he inquired how he managed to get them. Asa wanted to explain it properly in detail so that Maiserung might not commit mistake as before. He asked him to listen carefully and patiently. He began to tell, but Maiserung was impatient to listen who said, "I know, I know" and went away hurriedly hoping that he could also get monkey meat as much as he wanted.

The next day Maiserung passed through the dwelling place of monkeys with a big basket on his back. Monkeys saw him and asked,

"Where are you going, uncle?" then Maiserung replied,

"I am going to pluck nzamtsi so whoever is willing to take fruit may please come, I will lead you to the tree."

Believing what he said, a group of monkeys followed him. They reached the nzamtsi tree which was bearing lot of fruits, so he asked them to climb up on it. But as for him, he sat down and was making a mallet. Then one of the monkeys asked,

"What are you doing, uncle?"

Maiserung replied "I am making a mallet to kill you when you get down from the tree."

Hearing that, the monkeys were frightened, jumped to the other tree and all fled away. But the smallest one could not

jump like other bigger ones so he climbed down near Maiserung and asked for mercy. But Maiserung replied saying that all the other monkeys had fled away so he could not allow him to escape. He struck the baby monkey with the mallet he just made and killed it.

He tied the monkey on top of a long pole, and carrying the pole, he was returning home. Meanwhile, the monkeys who had escaped reported the incident to other monkeys and that the youngest one among them could not escape. All the monkeys were therefore waiting for the return of Maiserung. When they saw him with the dead monkey on the pole they were furious. They caught him and bound his hands tightly with a strong rope. Relatives of the dead monkey tried to kill him then and there, but elders stopped them saying that he must be executed according to their customary law.

Since Maiserung did not return home that night his wife went to Asa the following morning and requested for help. Asa went to the dwelling place of monkeys and found that Maiserung was tied against a post and was about to be executed. Asa begged them for mercy and after a long negotiation he redeemed his friend by offering the monkeys thirty dogs.

The next day, as agreed upon, Asa took with him thirty large dogs and gave them to the monkeys. But the monkeys did not know what to do with the dogs. So he instructed them to securely tie each monkey on the back of each dog so that they could enjoy riding on them. The monkeys were thrilled and everyone wanted to be the first to ride on the back of dog. Finally, the elders selected the most able monkeys among them, and as per the advice of Asa, each one was securely tied against the back of each dog. After this, Asa returned home.

But after covering a certain distance, Asa called out his dogs "tie-tie." Hearing their master's call, all the dogs ran towards Asa. Since the dogs were jumping and running very fast it resulted to heavy jolting. Finally, all the thirty monkeys died on the back of dogs and Asa let his dogs ate up all of them.

Asa constructed a huge house by the side of the main road. One day, a rich cattle businessman was coming toward his house with a herd of cattle. Asa brought a heavy rain by his magic power which restrained them to move further. The businessman requested him to permit them take shelter in his house for a night. Asa replied that he and his men could do so except the cattle, because animals might dirty the house. But the man insisted arguing as his cattle never passed dung inside the house. So Asa agreed on the condition that he would take the cattle whichever passed dung inside his roof. The man was confident so he agreed to the condition.

When everyone was asleep, Asa went out and collected stem of taro, cooked them properly which became just like cow-dung. After it cool down completely, he put them at the anus of all the cattle and scattered remaining cooked taro all around. After which he went to his bed. He rose up early in the morning, called the businessman and others accompanied him and inspected the cattle. They found cow-dung in every anus of the cattle. So according to their agreement the man had to give away all his cattle to Asa.

When Maiserung visited Asa's house he was startled to see the cattle filled the house. He asked his friend how he could get such a large number of cattle within a short period of time. At first, Asa refused to tell him the truth, because Maiserung was very stupid who always wanted to do things hastily without considering pros and cons in advance and never had

patience to listen to him carefully. But, as Maiserung apologetically requested him, Asa told him to listen carefully so that he might not make mistake again. He tried to tell his friend all the details how he got such a herd of cattle. But this time too, before Asa finished relating the details Maiserung ran away thinking that he would not commit any more mistakes.

Maiserung, imitating Asa, constructed a big house nearby the main path and was waiting for an opportunity of meeting any cattle businessman. One day, a rich man was coming with many cattle toward his house, so he caused heavy rain as Asa did. The owner of the cattle asked Maiserung whether he and his men could take shelter in his house with his cattle. He agreed on the condition that no cattle should pass dung in his house, and if any cattle did so he would take the whole cattle. The rich man agreed because his cattle never pass dung during night hour.

When night hour came, Maiserung was patiently waiting for the men to sleep. After all of them slept he hurriedly collected stems of taro, cooked and stirred them properly so that they became similar with cow-dung. When it was still hot he put them into the anus of every cattle, and due to pain the cattle began to moo. Hearing the moo of the cattle the men woke up and saw Maiserung putting hot paste of cooked taro stems in the anus of the cattle. With anger, they bound Maiserung and took him away with them.

Fortunately, at that time, Asa was in the place where travelers used to take rest and was busy trying to do a trick on any travelers taking rest there. He brought with him both living and dry fishes, climbed up a tall tree and kept the fishes on a branch of it and left. Then from a distance he saw a man with herd of cattle and along with them was Maiserung whose

hands were bound behind his back, and were approaching the resting place. Asa ran after them and reached the place where they were resting. He told them that during his boyhood days his parents used to bring down both living and dried fishes from the top of the tree. The rich businessman asked if Asa were able to do the same. If he were able to, he would set free Maiserung from bondage. Then Asa quickly climbed up the tree and threw down both the living and dried fishes. As promised, the man also set free Maiserung.

Once, Maiserung, carrying a huge book, was wandering nearby a big lake. He met a mother crocodile, who asked,

“From where did you get the book?”

Maiserung replied,

“I received this book from a fairy who asked me to teach children with this book.”

The crocodile requested him to teach her sons, too. Maiserung agreed and asked her to send one of her sons the following morning. The crocodile had two sons, she sent the elder son to Maiserung. When the young crocodile entered his house, he cut off its head, hanged it on the wall and ate the body. After a few months, the mother crocodile met Maiserung and enquired about the fate of her son. Maiserung replied that he was doing well in his studies. The crocodile was happy and sent her second son too to Maiserung. When the younger one came, Maiserung cut off its head as he did earlier to the elder one, hanged it on the wall and ate the body part.

After some days, the mother crocodile met Maiserung and inquired about her children’s education. He told that the elder son was so wise and could speak like birds. As for the younger

brother, he was also able to read and write Zeme fluently. The mother crocodile was very happy to hear the progress of her children. She told Maiserung that she would visit them the following day. Hearing that, Maiserung was taken abrade. He did not know what to say, so he simply walked off without a word. Before the mother crocodile came, he went and hid in a neighbor's house the following morning. When the crocodile came and opened the door, she was startled to see the heads of her sons hanging on the wall. She felt so grieved and speechless. Vengeance was the only option for her. She hid in Maiserung's house and waited for his return the whole day. When noon arrived, Maiserung went to his house and called out "my house, my house." Then he murmured,

"My house uses to response me before; but today, there may be someone inside and not safe for me to enter. That is why it refused to respond."

Saying this he went away. After awhile, he returned and called his house again, then the house responded,

"Yes, here I am."

Then Maiserung said,

"Non-living things never speak."

Maiserung came to know the presence of crocodile in his house so he left his house for some days.

A few days after, the villagers went to catch fishes in the river together. Maiserung also went, but he was aware that the crocodile might be hiding somewhere to take revenge on him. So he was always alert. When he was fishing, the crocodile transformed herself into a big fish and moved toward him. Maiserung suspected that it was the crocodile; so he said,

“If fish died, it uses to remain at the bottom of river bed. But how does this dead fish is moving towards me?”

Hearing it, crocodile quickly dived into the river and Maiserung ran away. After this incident Maiserung never went to the river side anymore.

Asa and Maiserung went to collect iron from a big rocky hill to make their weapon. In the rock there lived many snakes with their king. They made noises when taking out iron from the rock which disturbed the sleep of the snake king. The king of the snake got angry and sent his warriors to kill them. When the snake warriors went near them, Asa and Maiserung picked them up with tongs, one on the head and the other on the tail, burned them in the fire and ate them up. The snakes went turn by turn to attack them, but Asa and Maiserung ate them up whichever came. Lastly, the king of the snake went. But like before, Asa picked up its head and Maiserung its tail. When they were about to burn him, the snake king requested to show mercy promising them to give a magic stone ‘ditgaa’ with which they could kill any animal by way of calling them. They told the snake to give ditgaa first, only then he would be set free. The snake vomited out many magic stones but they were not ditgaa, so they refused to accept anyone of them. Finally, the snake vomited out ditgaa from his stomach. Then Asa and Maiserung set the snake free.

After they owned the ditgaa, they needed no more work. Using the ditgaa whenever they called out any animal the animal would instantaneously die. In this way, they were able to kill any kind of animal they wanted for their food.

Scene-vi: Maiserung left his house and stayed with Asa

Unfortunately, misfortune struck both of them. Their wives passed away soon after they owned the magic stone. For many days both of them mourned for the death of their wives in their own respective houses, hence did not see each other for several days. Later, Asa re-married a monkey, but Maiserung was not thinking to take a new wife. One morning Maiserung remembered his friend, so he went out to visit him and enquired about his health. When he was going, there was heavy rain and the stream between their houses was overflowed. He could not cross the river because he did not know how to swim. He tried to cross the river through shallow portion, but he was again unable to make up which portion of the river was deep and which shallow. When he was standing by the side of the river thinking what to do, he saw a mother monkey coming to draw water. So he asked her about the shallow portion of the river. But she rudely replied,

“Deep is deep, shallow is shallow.”

Maiserung was annoyed by such an improper reply and more over he was hungry, too. He called the monkey with his ditgaa and she died instantaneously. So he ate her up. After eating the mother monkey the water level of the stream had subsided, hence Maiserung was able to cross the stream. He went to Asa’s house and enquired about his health. But since his wife did not return Asa asked Maiserung if he saw his wife on the way. Maiserung said ‘no’. Asa explained to him saying he married a mother monkey; she went to fetch water from the river, but did not return. Maiserung told him that he ate up one mother monkey for she did not reply him properly. Then they realized that Maiserung had eaten Asa’s wife. When they were conversing, the spirit of a young monkey ran away from Asa’s

back which signified that their ditgaa ran away from them at that moment.

After Asa lost his monkey wife, they lived together in one house again. But they became very poor because they had lost their ditgaa. They also could not work in the field anymore, because for many years, their livings depended on their ditgaa only without doing any work in the field. As years went by only one cloth and one dao remained with them and they were compelled to use them by turn. So Asa asked Maiserung,

“When do you want to wear cloth and when to use dao?”

Maiserung was unable to decide initially. After serious thought, he chose to wear the cloth during day time and the dao at night, because he was afraid during night hour. So Asa worked with the dao during day hour and slept with the cloth at night. Maiserung had to do in reverse way. He worked with the dao at night and slept with the cloth during day hour.

When winter arrived, Asa observed that Maiserung was unable to bear winter cold. But it was not possible for him to part the cloth to his friend, so he told Maiserung not ask him for the cloth. If he did so he would be cursed and turned into a creature that would be neither man nor animal, but would only screech ak-ak-ak. But Maiserung could not tolerate winter cold any further. So one very cold winter night he snatched away the cloth from Asa and went to the field. Immediately after that, Maiserung was transformed into a creature which was neither man nor animal, but kept on running here and there screeching ak-ak-ak since then.

14. Hekei And Naimiak

In the beginning there was no light in the world. At that time there lived a man named Lungneu. He had no children. One day, Lungneu met Hekimpei (an evil spirit) who was selling human seed. When Hekimpui sold the seed to anyone, he used to set one condition. The condition was that, children born with the seed he sold must be share between them. Agreeing to the condition, Lungneu bought the human seed and gave it to his wife.

She gave birth many babies, but all happened to be handicapped. Some were lame or blind, some others were deaf or dumb and so on. Finally, she gave birth two pieces of shell. Lungneu and his wife thought that they were of no use, so they threw them away under their bed. When Lungneu and his wife went to the field, two handsome young men came out from their shells, did all the necessary house works, play with the children of neighbors and entered into their respective shells before their parents returned. This went on for several days, so people told the couple about the two handsome young men in their house.

Initially, they did not believe, but neighbors insisted as true. So one morning, they pretended to go to the field and hid in a place nearby. As they were curiously watching they saw two young men emerged from the shells and went out. Lungneu and his wife did not want them to go back to their shells so they destroyed the shells. In the evening, the two young men returned and found that their shells were broken into pieces. They met their parents and said that they did not have a hiding place. Any time Hekimpei might appear; then they would soon die. Their parents said that they broke the shells so that they

might live together without hiding. They called the elder son Hekei and the younger brother Naimiak. They dug a hole in the kitchen used to hide the boys there every evening.

One fateful day, Hekimpei came to divide the children. When the parents of the children learnt that Hekimpei was coming, they hid the two boys in the hole and placed on it an oven. For other handicapped children, they engaged them in various works such as pounding rice, cleaning the house, cooking; while some others were sent away to fetch water. When Hekimpei saw the children engaging in various activities he inquired about the rest. Lungneu told him that they were the only children born by the human seeds he bought from him. But Hekimpei would not accept his argument and insisted for other children, lest he would search them by himself. Thinking that Hekimpei would never find them, Lungneu asked him to search by himself if he was so sure of himself.

Hekimpei removed the oven and dug out Hekei and Naimiak from their hiding place. Then Hekimpei asked one of them to follow him. Hekei said that he would follow him as he was elder, but Naimiak also said the same thing as he was younger. So Hekimpei chose the elder brother to go with him. Just before departure Hekei and Naimiak exchanged their rings. If one of them died the ring would return to the person alive. After exchanging their rings, Hekei left with Hekimpei.

On the way, they met an old widow who happened to be the aunt of Hekei. The widow told Hekimpei that she wanted to speak to Hekei without anybody present. So Hekimpei brought Hekei to her and went a little distance away. She told Hekei that whosoever went with that Hekimpei never returned.

Then Hekei asked her what he should do so that he might live. His aunt told,

“When you enter into the house of Hekimpei you will find many skulls hanging on the ceiling. When the skulls see you they will laugh and welcome you saying they will have a new company. There, you will find an iron rod nearby. Take the iron rod and beat those skulls without mercy.” She continued,

“Hekimpei will feed you with good food so that you become healthy and fatty. He will occasionally ask you about your stool. Then you should reply that you are still passing a good amount of stool. Seeing your health, he will ask you to pass stool in front of him. By then you will be very healthy that even your stool will become as small as the droppings of sparrow. Then Hekimpei will be ready to eat you.”

Hekei's aunt also instructed him what he must act at the crucial moment. She said,

“On the day when he is ready to eat you, he will dry paddy. He will then make a big fire in the hearth and put a big pot on it which will become red hot. Hekimpei will ask you to come closer to the fire and puff it so as to increase the heat of the fire. When you go near it, you must put off the fire. Then Hekimpei will say, ‘What a naughty boy is he?’ He will call you to come near him and show you how to increase the heat of fire. There, you will find a big hammer nearby. When he is showing you, you must immediately pull down the pot upon him and then hit him with the hammer. Put chaff upon his body and burn it! After that you must come back to me.”

She sent him back to Hekimpei after telling him all those secrets. Hekei followed Hekimpei and reached Hekimpei's

house. He found the house exactly as his aunt described. The skulls were hanging on the ceiling and were making noises. Hekei did exactly what the old widow told him to do. He beat the skulls mercilessly. He also followed all the instructions, and finally while Hekimpei was blowing the fire, he took the big hammer, pulled down the red hot pot upon him and hammered him to death. Then he rushed and reported the whole details to his aunt.

The widow was very happy when Hekei returned safe and sound. She asked him if he had burnt the dead body. Then he realized that he had forgotten it, so he rushed back to Hekimpei. Fortunately, Hekimpei was conscious only at the lower part of his body and was trying to put on his belt. Hekei hit him again with the hammer, put chaff on the dead body, put fire on it and returned to his aunt.

Hekei's aunt being a very poor widow and did not have sufficient to eat, he wanted to help. He transformed into a cock and asked his aunt to sell him to the people. What she should not sell was the cage. So she sold the cock but brought back the cage. From the cage Hekei changed himself into human being. In the same manner, he transformed himself into different kinds of domestic animals like dog, pig, goat and cattle. His aunt sold all of them but, as instructed by Hekei, she would always bring back the rope with which she used to take the animals out. Likewise, each time, Hekei would transform into human being again through the rope. In that way, they gathered a huge amount of money and with the money, they purchased everything they needed. So they never experienced hunger and thirst thereafter.

One day, Hekei turned into a big mithun and his aunty took him to the market to sell. On the way she met Hekimpei. The

mithun (Hekei) knew that he was Hekimpei (evil spirit) so he made a signal with his eyes to his aunt not to sell him to that fellow. But his aunt did not understand the signal. She said that she would not sell the rope. But he said that he had nothing to do with the mithun but only for the sake of the rope he was buying the mithun. Since Hekimpei was insisting to take the mithun with the rope and that she did not understand the meaning of the signal given by Hekei, she sold away the mithun with the rope. She came back home very upset thinking that he would surely die.

When Hekimpei was going towards his house, on the way, there was a lake and the mithun struggled to free from the man. But Hekimpei said he need not struggle because he knew his identity. When they came close to the lake; with all his might, the mithun freed himself, jumped into the lake, turned into a fish and mingled with other fishes. Then Heikimpei also turned into an otter and ate the fishes in the lake. But Hekei turned into tammuine (a kind of bird) and flew away. Hekimpei again turned into an eagle and chased him. At that time, Leumale was going to fetch water in a well so Hekei turned into a bead and entered in her necklace. Hekimpei went to the woman and tried to snatch away her necklace, but Leumale struggled and broke her necklace. Then Hekei turned into a sesamun and entered in the basket of Leupuile who was carrying a basket full of sesamun. Hekimpei pulled down the basket, turned into a jungle fowl and started eating the sesamun. But Hekei immediately turned into a wild cat and ate up jungle fowl (Hekimpei). In that way, Hekei killed two Hekimpeis (evil spirits).

After killing Hekimpei, Hekei felt quite relieved and went back to his aunt. Seeing Hekei alive his aunt was overjoyed. After staying happily together for a few months, Hekei wanted

to test his strength. So he asked his aunt who was the strongest man among the Zeme people. But his aunt advised him never to make war or challenge anyone. Because her only wish was live happily together. But he was insisting. So she told the name of Nsiangne Kilui. She said no one dared to fight with him; because not only he but also he had many sons who were equally strong. Whosoever challenged him never be spared but used to be killed by them. Anyway, his aunt did not want to totally discourage him. So she said,

“But if you are determined to fight with him, you must make all the necessary preparation in advance, because it will not be an easy fight. First, you must prepare a large quantity of bread and carry them with you. The village of Nsiangne Kilui is very far from here. You need to take a long journey.”

As for his weapons, she commanded,

“Take a spear, a dao, an empty gourd and a bundle of plantain leave!”

She then foretold,

“When you reached a crossroad, you will find a house that belongs to a witch who has two daughters. If the witch finds you first, she will say, *a young man of Zeme is supposed to come and has already arrived*. She will then eat you. But if either daughter sees you first; they will say, *one young man of Zeme is supposed to come and has come*. She will then marry you.”

She continued,

“Anyway, you will be seen first by one of her daughters. So when you sleep together, the bundle of plantain leave with you must be kept between you and the girl. You should never

intercourse with her that night. In case if you did, the bundle of plantain leave your side will be withered and the other side fresh. In the morning, you must throw the empty gourd into the lake near their house. If it floated on the water and the plantain leave withered, you cannot defeat Nsiangne. But if the plantain leave on your side were fresh and the empty gourd sank into the water, you can defeat him.”

Hekei requested his aunt to prepare bread for his journey, so she prepared them as many as peaks of hills. With the help of his magic power he put the whole bread into a basket and set off the journey. When he reached the junction of the witch’s house, as told by his aunt, one of the daughters came out from the house and found him. Then she said,

“One young man of Zeme is supposed to come and has arrived. So I will be his wife.”

She was very fair and graceful, so Hekei immediately felt in love with her. She took him to her bedroom and slept with him that night. Hekei remembered what his aunt told her to do, so he put the bundle of plantain leave between them. But he could not resist the urge and had intercourse with her.

In the morning, as he woke up, he saw the plantain leave on his side withered; while the other side remained fresh. He regretted for what he had done disobeying his aunt, but it was over. Anyway, as per his aunt’s instruction, he got up, went to the lake and threw the empty gourd into it. Like what his aunt had said, the gourd failed to sink into lake, but floated on the water.

Hekei was now sure that he would not defeat Nsiangne but he did not want to be a coward. So he set off his journey and

reached the village of Nsiangne the following day. He loudly called out "Nsiangne", and the latter meekly responded,

"Yes, I am here!"

Repeatedly calling him he went nearer and nearer to the house of Nsiangne. As he went on calling, his voice became weaker and weaker; while Nsiangne's voice became stronger and stronger. As soon as he reached the house, Nsiangne took out his spear, hurled it at Hekei and killed. Then the finger-ring of Hekei fell from his finger producing sound "tri-tri" and went to Niamiak, his younger brother. Seeing the ring, Niamiak came to know that his elder brother was slain by someone. He immediately got up and asked his mother to prepare food for his journey without delay. His mother understood the urgency. So without asking any reason, she urgently prepared a large amount of food. With his magic power, Niamiak put all food his mother had prepared into a small lunch-box and set off his journey. First, he went to his aunt, who lived with Hekei, and asked about the details. She told everything from the beginning to the end.

Naimiak told her that he had to avenge for his elder brother and requested her to tell him what he must do in order to defeat Nsiangne. His aunt instructed him exactly the same as she did to his elder brother. Taking his aunt's instruction into his mind, Naimiak set off his war expedition. When he reached the crossroad of the witch's house he stood there and looked around. Then one of the daughters came out from the house and said,

"The young man of Zeme has arrived again. I should be his wife."

Saying this she took him to her bedroom and slept with him. At night, he put his dao, spear and the bundle of plantain leave between them. He did not touch the girl, though she attempted to lie with him. He told her as there were dao and spear between them which would hurt her if she came near him. So she stopped insisting. They woke up in the morning and found that the plantain leaves on his side was fresh; while the other side was withered. Naimiak went to the lake and threw the empty gourd into the water which immediately sank into the water.

When Niamiak reached the village of Nsiangne, he called out "Nsiangne" in a low voice. With confidence, Nsiangne responded the call of Naimiak loudly. Naimiak kept calling the name of his adversary and as he approached the house nearer and nearer his voice became stronger and stronger; whereas the voice of his adversary became weaker and weaker. When he reached the house of Nsiangne, he thunderously kicked the main post of the house which frightened Nsiangne and all his family members. They all fled away. At that time the dead body of Hekei was still lying near the house of Nsiangne. As soon as Nsiangne and his family members fled from their house, Hekei sneezed and came back to life. He went to his younger brother, Niamiak, and said, "I was sleeping."

On the way when they were returning home Hekei asked his younger brother if the latter had intercourse with his wife. Naimiak told that he would never save him if he were not innocent. It was only because of his innocence that he was able to save his elder brother. But Hekei was not fully satisfied; so after awhile, he again asked if Naimiak had slept with his wife. This time, Naimiak was a little annoyed because his elder brother did not believe his word. He asked his elder brother to

kill him if he did not believe his word. So Hekei took out his dao and killed his younger brother.

Hekei went back to his wife and now he was fully convinced that his younger brother was, no doubt, innocent. He felt so remorse for what he had done to his younger brother. He sobbed. Then there came the witch, mother of his wife, with long hairs covering all over her body asked what had happened to him. Hekei narrated the whole story to her. Then she consoled him,

“If you really want to bring back your younger brother to life, go up to the hill and keep on going till you find a leaf moving continuously, though there is no wind. He will come back to life if you fan him with that leaf.”

Hekei went up in search of that leaf and found that there was a plant moving without being disturbed by any agent. He picked up the leaf and fanned his dead brother. Niamiak then came back to life.

They resumed their journey back to their parents, and on the way, Hekei repeated the same question if Naimiak had intercourse with his wife. Then Naimiak asked his elder brother to burn the jungle when he was standing on the stump in the middle of the jungle. He challenged,

“I will transform into an eagle and if a single of my feather is burnt, you may suspect me; but if not, no word of suspicion should come out from your mouth again.”

Hekei burnt the jungle and there was a big fire which burnt up all the dry leaves and plants. The burning smoke turned into dark, and along with smoke, he flew high up in the sky. Hekei thought that his brother would die, but when the flame

diminished he came back and landed on the same stump. Not a single feather was burnt.

Even after reaching back home Hekei was still suspecting his younger brother that the latter must have had intercourse with his wife. Naimiak now felt so spiteful and did not want to live together with his elder brother any longer. So he challenged him in presence of their father,

“Let us contest the power of our light whose would be brighter and stronger.” Their father also agreed with it. So they set the condition,

“Who produces stronger and brighter light would be the elder brother; while the other would be the younger.”

First, the elder brother, Hekei, showed his power. He sent out his light all over the earth, but it could not give light in the caves. After which, the younger brother, Naimiak, was give chance to show his power. He sent out light all over the earth which reached even inside all the caves. From that day onwards, Hekei gave away his birthright as being the elder son. So from that day onward Naimiak received the birthright of the elder brother and Hekei as the younger one.

Naimiak and Hekei departed from each other, but promised to see each other once every month during full moon. At the time of their departure, their father blessed them,

“People will praise Hekei; but for Naimiak, they will murmur against the heat that it is too hot during summer and too cold during winter.”

15. Kidingbe

Once upon a time there lived a happy couple who were blessed with one son named Kidingbe. After they lived happily together for a few years, there occurred a severe epidemic in the village and the parents died. As a result of which Kidingbe became orphan at the age of three years. He was taken care of by his grandmother and he grew up to be an obedient and handsome young man.

One day, his grandmother asked him to go to the jungle and trap wild animals. So he took a strong fiber and went trapping animals in different places but someone stopped him saying that those places belonged to them. So Kidingbe went far away place and found an animal track by which many animals used to pass through. He laid a trap made of the fiber and went home.

The following day when he inspected the trap he found that a monkey was trapped there. Kidingbe was so happy who imagined as his grandmother would enjoy the animal organs like the liver, lungs, heart, pancreases etc. But when he went near the animal, to utter his surprise, the monkey began to speak saying if he set him free he would send a bigger animal the next day. Believing the promise, Kidingbe set the monkey free.

The orphan returned home and told his grandmother everything that had happened on that day. Then his grandmother rebuked him for setting the monkey free. The next day, he visited the trap and found that a deer was trapped. But like the previous occasion, the deer requested him to set him free promising to send an animal much bigger than himself, so he freed the deer again. In the same way when he

visited his trap, day after day, he found a bear, a very big wild boar and an elephant trapped. All of them promised him to send bigger animals than themselves if he set them free. So he set all of them free. Every time he told his grandmother that he set those animals free. Then she said that elephant was the biggest animal he should not set it free and rebuked him with harsh words.

The next day when he visited his trap, he found the king of hornbills trapped. The hornbill was too small as compared to the elephant, so Kidingbe was very upset. But when he went near the hornbill the latter begged for mercy and promised Kidingbe to give his beautiful daughter if the latter spared him. Kidingbe thought that he being just an orphan might not be able to get a wife, so he agreed to the offer. The hornbill then told Kidingbe to clean his house properly and thereafter opened the backdoor on the fifth day so as to enable him entered the house with his daughter through the backdoor for the wedding.

As instructed by the hornbill he cleaned his house, opened the backdoor and was waiting eagerly for the arrival of his bride. Meanwhile, the king of the hornbills and his daughter suddenly appeared through the backdoor. Kidingbe was attracted by the beauty of his bride so he married her.

He was so happy that he went out with his bride and met the king of doves. The king of doves greeted them and told Kidingbe that his daughter was supposed to marry on the same day the daughter of hornbill king married. He offered his daughter too to be his wife if it pleased him. The daughter of the dove king was also equally beautiful so he gladly accepted the offer and married her.

When the king of tortoise heard that the daughters of the king of hornbills and doves married Kidingbe; he also went and requested,

“I have a beautiful daughter who is to marry on the same day the daughter of hornbill king married, so if it pleases you I am willing to give my daughter also to you as your wife.” Then Kidingbe gladly accepted and married her too.

One day, Kidingbe made his three wives sit on a bench. He then spread a cloth on their thighs and slept on them putting his head on the thigh of one of his wives, his buttock on another thigh and his leg on the other thigh of his wives. His wives were drinking, gossiping and praising their husband.

When they were enjoying their time together, some servants of the king saw them. They went to the king and reported what they had seen. The king got jealous and wanted to take them as his wives. But, at the same time, he had to maintain his prestige. He could not simply snatch away the wives of others without a cause. So he planned to take away the beautiful wives of Kidingbe by his whims and fancy. One day, he summoned Kidingbe to his palace and told,

“Tomorrow, we will let our cocks fight and if my cock defeated your cock I will marry all of your wives.”

Kidingbe felt very sad. He went home weeping. Seeing him crying, one of his wives said,

“Why are you crying instead of smiling? You have three wives who comforted you day and night.”

Then he told her about what the king said to him. He was so much in grief so he expressed his helplessness to his wife,

“My cock is too small as compared to the king’s cock. Surely, my cock will be defeated by his cock, and in that case, I will lose all of you.”

Then the daughter of hornbill king told him to go to her father with his cock and ask for his help. Accordingly, Kidingbe took his cock and went to his father-in-law. Then his father-in-law applied his magic spell and armed his cock with metal claws and beak. The following day, as the king had pronounced, Kidingbe went to the king’s palace with his cock. The king’s cock was so huge that it even used to produce grave sound “kutegungku” when it crowed. But Kidingbe’s cock was very small that it only produced a high feeble pitch as, ‘kutegungku’.

They let their cocks fight, and as they fought, the cock of Kidingbe tore apart the craw of the king’s cock and killed it. As the king’s cock laid dead in front of them, the servants of the king’s palace disgracefully went and removed the dead cock. The king did not give up, but was still determined to take away Kidingbe’s wives. He told,

“We would let our dogs fight again. I will marry your wives if your dog could not beat mine.”

Kidingbe returned home weeping and his wife (the daughter of hornbill king) sent him to her father once again for help.

Kidingbe’s father-in-law gave his magic spell and armed the dog with metal claws and fangs. On the appointed day, Kidingbe took his dog to the king. The king’s dog was so huge that the height of Kidingbe’s dog did not even reach the body of the king’s dog.

When both let loose their dogs to fight, the king’s dog went barking and charging and pumped over Kidingbe’s dog. As a result, Kidingbe’s dog fell down beneath his rival but

immediately turned up his mouth and grasped the windpipe of the king's dog. The king's dog struggled with all his might to free his throat from the grasp, but his rival did not give up. Finally, his windpipe was torn and he succumbed to death. The king became so furious because the poor Kidingbe had humiliated him on both the occasions.

The king had many large mithuns but Kidingbe had a few small mithuns. He again challenged Kidingbe and told him that they would let their mithuns fight the next time.

"If your mithun could not defeat mine, I will marry all your wives," declared the king.

As before, his wife (daughter of the king of hornbills) sent him along with his mithun to her father. His father-in-law gave his magic spell and armed his mithun with sharp metal horns. On the appointed day, Kidingbe took his mithun to the king. Both the mithuns fought with their great might. As they went on fighting, both the mithuns were injured so severely. Finally, Kidingbe's mithun knocked down the king's mithun to the ground, then the intestine and stomach of the king's mithun came out and died. The king's servants disgracefully took away the dead mithun as before.

The king felt ashamed as he could not able to defeat the orphan even after three attempts. So he planned another trick. He challenged Kidingbe and told him that they would dig their own lakes that night, and see whose lake would be bigger the following day. If Kidingbe's lake was smaller, then he would marry all his wives.

Kidingbe returned home and worried because the king had been trying again and again to take away his wives from him. He thought for awhile and slept away when evening came. Then he saw a dream. In his dream, he saw that he was digging

the earth here and there with his father's spade which later became a big lake. He immediately got up and instructed his three wives to dig earth here and there all around with spade. So, as per their husband's instruction, the wives rushed out and dug the earth here and there all over the whole night. In that way, they covered a large area of land. In the morning, they found that all that were covered by them were fully flooded with water forming a large lake.

Meanwhile, the king also ordered his subjects to dig the earth the whole night. However, the orphan's lake turned out to be much bigger than the king's lake. The king still did not give up. He again challenged the orphan and said,

"This time we will contest swimming across our own lake, and if you failed to defeat me I will marry your wives."

The orphan was a poor swimmer and knew that his lake was too big for him to swim across so he became so sad. Then one of his wives (the daughter of the king of tortoise) sent him to her father for help. Kidingbe went to his father-in-law and told his problem. Then his father-in-law comforted him and promised to help. The king of tortoise commanded with a loud voice,

"All the tortoises must come to my son-in-law's lake, hide under water and carry him across his lake when competition begins."

So many tortoises came and hid themselves under the water. When Kidingbe entered into his lake they carried him across his lake and reached the other side of the lake quickly. But, as for the king, he got exhausted at the midway, hence could not reach the other side of his lake.

The king's anger grew worse than before. He again challenged Kidingbe for another contest,

“We shall scatter a full basket each of perilla (a variety of black sesame) and collect them back and fill the basket again. If you failed, your wives shall become my wives.”

Kidingbe was feeling very sad. He thought it would be impossible for him to do that. When he was thinking his wife (the daughter of the king of dove) comforted him and sent him to her father for help. Kidingbe told his father-in-law about the task he had to do to save his wives. Then the king of doves announced in a loud voice,

“Today, the king and my son-in-law are going to contest in gathering perilla. So all the doves must come and help my son-in-law.”

They measured two baskets full of perilla; and as set the time, both the king and Kidingbe threw perilla around the ground from their respective basket and hurriedly began to collect them back. The king called all his subjects to help him. Similarly, Kidingbe also called all the doves to action. Many doves came and within no time they refilled the big basket with perilla. But the king, despite all his subjects helped him could not put back all the perilla that were thrown onto the ground.

The king was repeatedly defeated by Kidingbe. All his evil designs only worked against him. He had lost his biggest cock, dog and mithun. Because of his dirty tricks, many had suffered and they slowly began to hating their king. The king now had nothing more with him to challenge the orphan, because he noticed that people were not happy with the way he was harassing the innocent because of his lust for women.

The king, instead of realizing his misdeeds, wanted to do away Kidingbe; so he ordered his soldiers to arrest and bury him alive. Accordingly, the soldiers went and arrested

Kidingbe. They then dug a grave a little away from his house to bury him alive there. At that time, the daughter of pangolin king, who happened to be a close friend of Kidingbe's wife, daughter of tortoise king, came to know about the king's conspiracy against her friend's husband. So she hurriedly dug a hole from the grave and linked up to Kidingbe's house. The soldiers buried him alive, but he crawled through the hole to his house. The soldiers then entered the house to take away the wives to the king. But as they entered, they were shocked to see Kidingbe inside with his wives. They ran and reported about the incident to the king.

The king was at his wit's end. He decided to burn Kidingbe alive along with him. He thought,

"Even if I died, I can come back alive by using my magical power. But if Kidingbe died, he has no magical power to do such a trick. He cannot come back to life again. Then I will marry his wives."

Thinking this, the king commanded his soldiers to burn both of them alive with his dogs. Kidingbe then said to his wives,

"I am done for! It is the end for me. Now the king will force you to marry him."

He instructed his wives what they must do after he was burnt to death. He said,

"You should gently tap the bones and listen carefully. Collect the bones that produced firm solid sound and wrap them in a new shawl; but throw away those that produced clanging hollow sound. After which, cover the bones you have collected with a big pot for five days and open it on the sixth day."

As ordered by the king, Kidingbe and the king with his dogs were burnt alive together. The wives of Kidingbe then

collected the bones that produced firm solid sound and wrapped them in a new shawl as instructed by their husband. When they were collecting the bones, the king's wife asked,

“What kind of bones are you collecting?”

“The bones that produced clanging hollow sound,” they replied.

So the king's wife collected the bones which produced clanging hollow sound when tapped. As done by the wives of Kidingbe, the king's wife also put them under a big pot for five days.

When they were burnt, the spirit of Kidingbe went to the land of dead. When he reached its gate he saw a man whose head was covered with a basket and was going here and there with much difficulty. The man requested him to bring him instruction from the king of the dead what he must do, so that he might be freed from the basket. When he proceeded further, he reached a bridge where he met another man who was unable to move forward as well as backward. The man asked him to bring words from the king of the dead that he might be able to move either forward or backward.

After crossing the bridge, he saw a tree which was filled with ripen fruits, but none of the fruits was able to fall down nor could the birds or animals eat them. The tree also asked him to bring word for him from the king of the dead what he should do. Then he saw a pond full of water, but unable to flow out and neither animals nor birds could drink water from there. The pond also requested him to bring words from the king of the dead what should he be done.

At last, Kidingbe met the king of the dead. So he conveyed all the problems he and others he met on his way were facing. Then the king told that he would make Kidingbe reign in place

of that jealous king who had harassed him. Kidingbe also put several questions for those people, tree and pond who requested him to bring words from the king of the dead.

When he asked for the man whose head was covered with a basket, the king could not give a word for him because the man had collected extra taxes and used them for himself.

The king also could not give any message for the man at the bridge, because the man used to cut the wood of the bridge with his dao whenever he went through it.

But for the tree, the king of the dead gave a word saying,

“When you go back, take away a necklace which is at the foot of the tree so that the fruits can fall down and the birds and animals can eat the fruits.”

The king of the dead also gave a word for the pond saying,

“There is a necklace in the source of the pond. Remove it when you go back so that water can flow out of the pond and animals and birds can drink water from there.”

When Kidingbe was returning from the land of the dead he took away the necklace from the source of the pond, then water began to flow out of the pond, animals and birds came and drank water from there.

The pond expressed thanks and blessed him that he was worthy of receiving praise and honor from men and women.

When he reached the tree he also removed the necklace from its foot, then fruits began to fall, animals and birds came and enjoyed its fruits.

The tree also praised him and blessed him saying he was worthy of receiving praise and honor from men and women.

When he reached the bridge, the man inquired about the message for him, but Kidingbe told that there was no way of liberty for him because he used to cut the wood of bridge whenever he moved across the bridge. Then the man wept bitterly.

Again he met the man whose head was covered with a basket. The man asked what word Kidingbe brought for him from the king of the dead.

Kidingbe told him that he used to collect extra taxes from the public so he has to face the same problem eternally and there was no way to redeem him from the punishment. The man wept bitterly, but none was there to comfort him.

After the five days were over, the wives of Kidingbe removed the pot which was covering the bones. As soon as they removed the pot, Kidingbe came back to life and their joy knew no bound.

Seeing Kidingbe who had risen from the dead, the king's wife was also hoping with a great hope for her husband to come back to life. But when she removed the pot which was covering the bones; instead of the king, his dog jumped out and killed her and all the soldiers.

Thereafter, Kidingbe, was crowned by the people. With the assistance of his wives and their friends, he ruled the kingdom very wisely and there was peace and prosperity in his kingdom throughout his life.

16. Ceube and Heradi

Once there lived two friends in a small village, Ceube and Heradi. Ceube was very clever but Heradi was slow-witted. It was heriak season (season for collection of thatch for house construction). One day, Ceube asked,

“Heradi, which way will you go today to carry your thatch?”

“I am going towards regwale (place where it is very cold)”, replied Heradi.

Then Ceube went ahead of him and hid inside Heradi’s thatch bundle. Heradi carried the heavy bundle with great effort making noise “hei, hei”. Ceube imitated him. So Heradi realized that someone was hiding inside the thatch bundle. But he kept mum thinking that he would carry it home and kill it. But when he reached the gate of his house Ceube quietly grabbed the gatepost and ran away.

The next day, Ceube again asked which way Heradi was taking. Heradi told as he was going toward ramzie (the place where the climate is warm). Ceube went ahead of him and hid himself inside the thatch bundle and Heradi carried him home again. As before when Heradi reached his gate Ceube quietly ran away.

Heradi came to know the trick of Ceube and decided to do the same thing. He asked Ceube which way he would go. Ceube told he would go towards regwa, but he went toward ramzie. Heradi went ahead of him and hid himself inside Ceube’s thatch bundle and waited the whole day, but it was in vain. The next day Heradi asked the same question and Ceube told him that he would go toward ramzie but went towards

regwa. As before Heradi went towards ramzie ahead of him and waited the whole day but Ceube did not come.

The next day also Heradi asked the same and went towards ramzie because Ceube told he would go towards regwa. Ceube came and found that Heradi was hiding inside the bundle of his thatch, so he said,

“Today, I have whetted and sharpened my spear like never before. Let me hurl it with my whole strength against my thatch bundle and see how deep it would enter.”

Heradi sprang out shouting,

“I am here!”

In another occasion, when Ceube and Heradi were going to the field, Ceube said,

“I am very thirsty. Let me drink a cup of wine from your house.”

Heradi told him to go to his house and asked his wife. Heradi waited on the way, while Ceube went to his house not only for wine, but also with evil intention of lying with his friend's wife.

Heradi's wife offered him wine but refused to lie with him. So Ceube brought her out of the house and told Heradi that she refused to offer him what he asked for. Heradi told her to grant the request. So obedient was she to her husband, Heradi's wife, not only served him wine, but also lay with him.

When Heradi came to know that Ceube slept with his wife, he became furious and decided to kill him. Heradi went to Ceube's field in search of him and found his body painted with grey soil. So Heradi did not recognize him. Ceube told that he was the grey Ceube and not his friend. Believing it, Heradi simply went back home.

One day, when Ceube was weaving a bamboo mat, Heradi came to help him. Ceube said,

“If you are keen of helping me, sit down on the mat and weave the other end.”

As Heradi was fully engaged in his work, Ceube steadily wove Heradi’s tail into the mat and asked,

“Heradi, what do you fear most?”

Then Heradi replied that he was really scared of the sound of trumpet and the sparkling of spearhead.

Ceube went inside his house and took his spear, a trumpet, a packet of fermented soyabeans and a flaming torch. He blew the trumpet, lighted the mat and threatened the tiger with his spear.

The frightened Heradi jumped and roared and ran in fear. Then Ceube threw his spear and the fermented soyabean at him shouting,

“My speared victim rots instantly”.

Even to these days, Zeme people use to say “Ceube’s speared victim rots instantly” as a proverb.

The poor Heradi was confused, ran away, dragging the burning mat along thinking he would really die that day.

Heradi felt very angry and started thinking to kill Ceube for humiliating him several times. One day, while Ceube was seriously weaving a basket, Heradi came across and saw him. Although he was angry, his curiosity got the better of him. He asked,

“Ceube, what are you doing?”

“I heard the earth is going to overturned, so I am weaving a basket for myself,” Ceube replied.

Heradi believed what Ceube said and requested him to make a basket for him too. Then Ceube told,

“I cannot even make enough baskets for my wife and children. Why should I make for you?”

But Heradi kept on requesting him. Initially, Ceube pretended to be reluctant, but finally agreed. He told Heradi to shake the trees and sit near the one that did not move. Heradi did as he was commanded. Ceube carefully wove a cage over him and tied him firmly to the tree. He put a cudgel and a thorny branch near Heradi and shouted,

“I have caged and tied the cruel Heradi today. Whosoever wants can come and take revenge”

When animals hear it, a deer came. Then Heradi said,

“Deer, our fathers are kinsmen and we are known by all to be very close friends. So please set me free from the bondage.”

The deer said “What kinsmen! What friends! Because of you I cannot even search for food freely. When I go towards north, you are there; when I go toward south, you are there; when I go towards east and west you are always there waiting to kill me. You ate up many of my relatives and friends, how can I set you free”. He beat Heradi with the cudgel and thorny branch and went away satisfactorily.

All the animals that Heradi had continuously harassed and tormented came one after another. Heradi pleaded the same words to all of them but no one listened, but all did to him the same as the deer did. Heradi was so sad but no animal dared to risk its life by setting Heradi free. At last, when a wildcat came, Heradi said,

“You and I are of the same family and look alike, so please set me free. I promise I will never harm you”.

The wildcat was reluctant at first, but when Heradi pleaded him repeatedly he felt pity on him. But the wildcat did not fully trust Heradi. He went a little further away and secretly dug a hole on the ground. He stored some food and bones in it and went back to release Heradi. The wildcat untied the last rope and ran to the hole, but Heradi chased him and caught his leg. The wildcat asked him,

“What are you holding?”

Heradi said he was holding his leg. Then the wildcat said,

“You are really foolish. That is a dry root and not my leg.”

The foolish Heradi believed his word and loosened his grip. The wildcat ran again but before he reached the hole, Heradi grabbed his ear. The wildcat gave him a dry leaf and said he should grab his ear instead of a dry leaf. Heradi let go of the wildcat’s ear, so he quickly ran into the hole. Heradi felt very hungry, so he was waiting for the wildcat come out of the hole. But the wildcat had prepared for himself everything well ahead. He stayed in the hole, eating the food and munching the bones he had stored. Heradi heard it and asked,

“What are you eating?”

The wildcat replied he was gnawing his knee-joint. Heradi asked why? How could one eat his own knee? The wildcat said he was eating his own knee because he felt hungry and it was very tasty. He also explained to Heradi look up towards the sky with mouth wide open and gnaw the knee with the whole strength would drive away hunger. The foolish and hungry Heradi believed the deceiving words of the wildcat. He did exactly what was told, and finally killed himself.

The wildcat remained in the hole for a long time because he was not sure whether Heradi was dead or still alive. After

awhile, a fly came in and told him that Heradi was already dead. When he came out from the hole, he found that its body had already been rotten and only skeleton remained. He picked a hollow bone, made a flute with it and spent his days playing the flute.

One day, when he was playing melodiously a group of monkeys came and snatched it away from him. The wildcat felt so sad because he could not get it back and there was none to help him. Fortunately, there came a crow and asked him,

“Why are you feeling sad?”

The wildcat said a group of monkeys came and snatched away his flute. The crow comforted him and promised to bring the flute back. But in return, the crow also asked a favor to make him black when he brings back the flute. Then the crow went to the monkeys and requested them to let him play the flute, but they refused. The crow kept on insisting till an old monkey told,

“Let my grandson play it!”

The young monkeys were unwilling to give it to the crow, but since the old monkey had commanded, very reluctantly they passed it to him. As soon as the crow got the flute he flew away. The angry young monkeys went to the old monkey and pinched him to death saying it was his fault.

The crow brought back the flute to the wildcat. The wildcat was very happy and grateful to the crow; so in return, he fulfilled the wish of the crow by making the latter as black as charcoal. Since then the crow remained black.

17. The Girl Who Was Swallowed By a Tree

Once upon a time there lived two sisters in a village. The elder sister loved her younger sister so much that she was ever ready to please her any time by any cost. The younger sister was very fond of flowers. Once they went to forest to collect firewood. On the way they saw some beautiful flowers blooming on a tree. The younger sister asked her sister to pluck them for her. So she climbed up the tree and dropped a flower. The younger sister saw that the flower was stained with droppings of fowls so she asked her to give another one. The elder sister climbed up higher, plucked another flower and dropped. However, the younger sister again complained that it was stained with pig's excrement and asked for another one. Every after she dropped the flower, the younger sister would ask for another one with this and that complaints. Finally, the elder sister climbed up the top of the tree, plucked the best flower without any stain, full of fragrant and dropped it down to her sister. She was very happy and said,

“I will take this, please come down let us go”

Unfortunately the tree began to swallow her feet and she could not come down. So she asked her younger sister to return home. But the latter said,

“I am afraid of hengum (a kind of bird) I cannot go alone.” Then the elder sister said,

“Run in haste and go home. I shall talk to you till it reaches my mouth”.

The younger sister ran back home. But on the way she heard the cried of hengum "m.m.m". She got frightened, so she asked her elder sister to talk to hengum not to cry. Then the elder sister began to sing,

"Hengumpoi koa so! koa so!

A na de lu be lwa ge kiagaibeu lai lie."

(Bird, do not cry! I'll talk to my child, till she reaches that hill).

The younger sister ran to a distance and asked her sister how far the tree swallowed her.

"It has reached my knee" replied her elder sister.

Every time she had covered a distance, the younger sister stopped and asked where it had reached and requested her to sing the same song. Whenever hengum cried "m.m.m" the younger sister trembled with fear, so her elder sister kept talking to her singing the same song. Every time the younger sister asked she would reply, the tree had swallowed her waist, her shoulders and her neck. At last, before it reached her mouth, she said,

"The tree swallows me continuously and now it is reaching my mouth and I cannot talk to you anymore. Go home and farewell."

The younger sister went home weeping and told everything to their parents. They were shocked to hear it. They called all their relatives and informed the villagers who went to the forest with daos and axes to cut the tree. When they found the tree they felled it and blood oozed out from the tree. With anger they cut the tree into pieces but found nothing except the bangles and necklaces of the girl.

18. The Two Lovers

Once there lived a handsome boy and a beautiful girl in Poilwa village. They felt in love from their childhood days. When they grew up, the boy went to the girl's parents and asked for her hand in marriage. But the girl's parents objected to the proposal because he was from a poor family. Even the girl also pleaded her parents, but they were adamant. This had caused a lot of sorrow and grief to the two. Both spent many sleepless nights worrying about their future.

After seriously thinking and talking over it, they thought it would be better for them to die together than live without each other. They said even though they were unable to live together as wife and husband on the earth, they could still be united in the next world. So they resolved to commit suicide together.

They went to "rehangrelei-nluitia" (a steep cliff between Poilwa and Ningdikie), tied their hairs together to jump into the cliff. But when the boy looked down the cliff he lost courage to jump. He quickly chopped off his hair with a knife and moved backwards. The poor girl fell to the bottom of the cliff and died alone, but the boy return home. On his way back, he heard a bird chirping,

"Camreu-camdet, camreu-camdet!"

He thought, "Oh, even birds and animals are laughing at me, because of my unfaithfulness and cowardly act. Now people will take me as a traitor and unreliable. This guilt will stay with me forever, so I shall go back to the rehangrelei-nluitia and join her".

He went back to the cliff and jumped to death. However, even in the world of the dead, the girl was forever ahead of the boy by a hill and failed to unite with him even after their death.

As a sign of their eternal separation, two bamboos grew up from the bottom of the cliff, leaning away from each other.

19. Mbing

Once there lived a couple in Jalukie, a Zeme village. They were blessed with a boy named Mbing. By birth, he was a bit different from other children, because he had mild mental retardation and could not mingle with friends. Due to his mental retardation his toys were also different from other children. He used to play with deer legs and wild boar. He would imprint them into the mud and act as though following their foot prints.

One day, he heard his parents talking about their paddy field being destroyed by a wild boar. Hearing the conversation he decided to go to the field and kill the boar. So he requested his parents to allow him visit the field, but they did not let him. But as he persisted, his parents finally allowed him to go with a warning as he should be very careful because the wild boar might attack him.

The next day, early in the morning, Mbing took his spear and went to the field. He saw fresh footprints of wild boar which led to its resting place. So he followed the footprints. When he saw the wild boar from its back side he speared it to dead and returned home. He did not tell his parents that he had killed the boar, but just said to them he was proud of something.

That night, one of his friends called him to sleep in the morung. Then Mbing's father asked his friend to enquire from Mbing what achievement that he was proud of it. When they reached the morung, Mbing told his friend that he had killed the big boar which had destroyed their field.

The following morning, Mbing's friend told his parents that a huge wild animal was killed by him. So his parents went to the place and found the big boar lying dead.

After returning home, his father proudly told the villagers about the valorous act of his son and asked them to have competition in race to share the meat of the boar. According to Zeme culture, whenever a wild beast was killed in the jungle by any hunter, the villagers used to be given a share of its meat. Those who came first to kill used to get more meat and the last one get the least.

Learning Mbing killed such a huge boar all by himself everyone in the village was awe-struck and amazed, because he was earlier considered as an insignificant stupid person.

Having achieved this glorious feat, Mbing gradually began to acquire a better understanding of things as if his senses awoke from a dream. His wisdom increased greatly and people started regarding him as an important citizen in the society. He did a lot of good things for the villagers such as sanitation, unification among the youth, helping the poor and the needy, etc. He became a good singer, too, and composed many songs.

When his parents decided to find him a wife, every girl was ready to marry him because he was from a wealthy family. His parents chose Nbiangkungle, a girl of hard working and good character from a neighboring village. Accordingly, Mbing married Nbiangkungle and a boy was born to them.

Nbiangkungle was prudent as well as a very loving woman who took great care of her husband and his family members, so all of her in-laws were very proud of her and Mbing, too, heartily loved his wife and their son.

One day, he gave his son a beautiful flower and the little boy played with it the whole day. Since no one knew the name of that flower, even today, the people Zeme called it Mbingnamrapa 'flower of Mbing's child'.

20. Kirumbe

Long long ago, in one of the Zeme villages, there lived a couple, Lungdi and his wife who had a son and a daughter. Both of their children were very obedient to their parents, hence they lived happily together for many years. However, when they grew up, their son, Kirumbe, refused to marry even after several persuasions.

One day, his parents gave him a bright spotless brinjal, and asked him to select a girl of his choice who is spotless and as beautiful as the brinjal. So he went to one of his neighbouring villages with the brinjal in search of his partner. He saw a very beautiful girl called Deibeile. She was so graceful and attractive that he fell in love with her and the girl also equally loved him. So their parents had agreed to let them marry. Accordingly, the marriage took place in the girl's village.

A few days after their marriage, Kirumbe was taking his wife to his village. Before reaching the village they stopped at a well, and suddenly, Deibeile realized that she had forgotten to take her weaving instrument. So Kirumbe had to go back to take it. Meanwhile, there was a tree above the well. He made a resting place on the tree for her to remain there till his return.

When Kirumbe went away and Deibeile sat on her resting place quietly, there came Tekotekale (a witch) to fetch water with an old container. The container looked like dried gourd and earthen pot. She saw the reflection of Deibeile through the water. Deibeile looked so beautiful that she mistook it to be her own look and spoke to herself,

“I look so beautiful and attractive. I need not draw water with these old containers.”

Saying it she threw them to the ground, broke them into pieces and went home without water.

There was no water at home so she needed to fetch water again. She took earthen pot and a horn of mithun, and went back to the well. As before, she saw the image of Deibeile. So she uttered the same words and broke the earthen pot. She tried to break the horn, too. So she threw the horn on the stone but it sprang back and hit her forehead. Seeing it, Deibeile could not control laughing. Hearing her laugh Tekotekale looked up and saw that it was the image of Deibeile.

She climbed up the tree and sat near Deibeile. After sitting together for awhile they began to remove lice from each other's head. Deibeile removed lice from Tekotekale's head first. Tekotekale pretended to remove lice from Deibeile's head; but instead, she plucked out the best hair and sucked her blood with it. Deibeile felt herself weaker and weaker, but did not know the reason why. As Tekotekale continued sucking her blood she finally died. After she died, Tekotekale also ate her up fully leaving only a piece of bone which dropped near to the well. From there the piece of bone sprout up into a tree and bore one fruit.

Tekotekale was still sitting in the place of Deibeile when Kirumbe returned. When Kirumbe saw Tekotekale he said to the witch,

“Your eyes are so big!”

Then the witch replied,

“I have been looking for you for a long time, so my eyes have become big.” Then Kirumbe asked,

“Why your shape is so strange?”

“I have been waiting for you so long that my shape has changed,” replied Tekotekale.

Kirumbe did not know that he was talking to a witch, the killer of his wife. Anyway, he plucked the fruit from the tree and brought Tekotekale home. He put the fruit on the ceiling of his house.

When Kirumbe and Tekotekale went out to work during day time, Deibeile used to come out from the fruit as a very beautiful girl, did all kinds of works and entered into the fruit again. When Kirumbe and Tekotekale returned home they were surprised to see that all the works in the house were properly done. This unusual happening had disturbed Kirumbe’s sleep. So, one morning, he enquired from the neighbours about the person who did all the works at home during their absence. Then the children told him,

“Every day we use to see a very beautiful girl who uses to work in your house during day time.”

Kirumbe became suspicious. So he sent Tekotekale to the field alone that day. After the witch left for the field, he pretended to go out, but hid himself in a corner of the house. Then Deibeile came out from the fruit and began to work inside the house. When Kirumbe saw her he immediately embraced her. Then Deibeile said,

“I am still feeling the pain. Tekotekale bit me and not yet fully recovered.”

Kirumbe realized what had happened to her. He made two axes. One was for Deibeile which had sharp edge of its blade and the other for Tekotekale with blunt edge. In the evening when Tekotekale returned home Kirumbe said,

“You have to fight tonight and whosoever win shall be my wife.”

He gave the sharp axe to Deibeile and the blunt axe to Tekotekale. In the fight Tekotekale was killed. Kirumbe buried Tekotekale in his compound, ran around the grave and sang a song,

Hegum go gumligumli de ge gumsangna lie lu!

Hegum go mpetbeu lo mrai mcui la lie!

(O plantain, come out a single plant as we love each other).

As soon as he sang the song a banana plant sprouted up from the grave. Kirumbe and Deibeile lived together happily for a short period only. They cultivated land. But since their field was far away from their village Kirumbe had to sleep in the field hut every night; while Deibeile supplied food for him. In the morning, she would wrap food with plantain leaf and take it to her husband and then returned home in the evening.

Kirumbe instructed his wife never to pluck plantain leaf from the grave. He warned her that, on the day she plucked it, the leaf would cut her to death. But it so happened that one morning, she could not get any plantain leaf even from the neighbors and there was no other thing to wrap the food. So she decided to pluck plantain leaf from the grave. As soon as she chopped it, the leaf cut her to death. But no one knew that she died.

Kirumbe was patiently looking for her arrival. Morning was already past and noon also about to be past; but still there was no sign of her coming. When afternoon approached an eagle came towards him and sang a song,

Kirumbe, n nau de gumli ne get cet,

Mih ge ne de pau kera gah eh

I helie a koa kesia be ne pau cang la lie.

(Kirumbe, your wife was killed by plantain leaf, but there was no one to report it to you so I am coming here to give report).

After singing the song the eagle flew away. When he went home he found only the dead body of his wife.

21. Songlepa and Mübungle

Once there lived two belles named, Leiyile and Leipuile, in a village. They were neighbors and were also intimate friends. Both were married in the same year. It so happened that the houses of their husbands also very close to each other. So, even after married they remained neighbors and maintained their close relationship as before.

Soon after married both got conceived and when delivery time approached, they got labor pain. The pain was terrible but when they came near to each other it used to subside and the pain used to go away when they touched each other's belly.

They also gave birth on the same day. Leiyile gave birth to a baby girl and she named her Mübungle. Leipuile gave to a baby boy and she named him Songlepa. Both the babies grew up to be very obedient and good children. They loved each other since childhood. When they attained marriageable age, Songlepa proposed Mübungle in marriage. But the girl's parents objected to the proposal. To her utter shock, Mübungle felt sick. Gradually her health deteriorated and then passed away.

The parents of Mübungle regretted so much but it was too late for them. After every burial preparation was made, they carried the dead body out from her room to the grave; but could not pass the door, so they called Songlepa to help. When Songlepa went near her body, he wailed uttering all his past memories how much they loved and care for each other, the days how they spent romance together and their fanciful plan for marriage and family set up thereafter. After Songlepa wailed and uttered all those words, they were able to carry her body out through the door.

When they reached the grave, they tried to lay the dead body into it; but again, they could not. So Songlepa entered the grave and spread his cloth with his hands and wept bitterly. Then fluid from her dead body dripped down and filled his cloth. He brought the fluid home and sprinkled over flower plants in his house. As he did this every morning the flower plants grew very fast and began to bloom. In this way, he took great care of the flowers.

One day, when he went out, a wildcat came and plucked the most beautiful flower and went away. When he returned home, he found his favorite flower missing. He asked all the neighbors if anyone saw someone plucked his flowers. Then a child told him that he saw a wildcat came and plucked the flowers.

The next day, while Songlepa was hiding somewhere watching the flowers, a wildcat came and plucked some flowers again. He caught the wildcat and asked,

“Why are you plucking my flowers?”

The wild cat replied,

“My aunty, Mübungle, asked me to bring these flowers to her, so I am just complying with it.”

Hearing the name of Mübungle he became excited and asked,

“Where is she?”

“She lives in Heruinam (the land of the dead),” said the wildcat.

“Can you take me to her?” asked Songlepa.

“If you really want to go to her, hold my tail firmly! I’ll take you to her, but do not release your hands till we reached the destiny,” the wildcat told.

Songlepa caught hold of the wildcat’s tail firmly and within a moment they reached heruinam. Mübungle was very happy to see Songlepa and said,

“The time has not yet come for you to live together with me; but for a few days, you can be with me and see how the people of heruime (the soul of the dead) enjoy life.”

So Songlepa spent a few days with her. The following day of his arrival, he went to the river with heruime for fishing. Each carried own baskets to keep fish there and they gave him also a basket which had a big hole at the bottom. He took some bamboo leaves and blocked the hole. Heruime collected dry bamboo leaves in their baskets; but except that, Songlepa did not see any fishes. So, like heruime, he also filled his basket with dry bamboo leaves. He cut a bamboo for his staff and when he shook it, many leaves fell down. When heruime saw it they said,

“Heringme kills fishes”.

(The living person kills fishes)

They collected all those bamboo leaves that fell from his bamboo staff. In the evening, when they returned home he saw all the dry leaves turned into fishes and his staff became a very big fish. Seeing Songlepa killed many fishes, Mübungle was so proud of him. She said,

“My lover caught the biggest fish.”

That night, they enjoyed those fishes and dried some.

The next day, heruime went to hunt bear and Songlepa also went with them. When they reached the jungle they screamed a

bear coming toward Songlepa. He was sitting on the heap of stones but did not see any bear. Then suddenly, he saw a big caterpillar moving towards him. He trampled it to death. When Heruine saw it they cheered keringme (Songlepa) had killed the bear. They took the dead caterpillar and went home howling.

The next day, the priest announced that enemies were coming to attack them. Fearing the enemy attack all the villagers ran away from the village. But Songlepa remained in the village as he had no where to go. When standing at the gate of the village, he saw no men except a great number of ants coming through the gate. He killed all the ants with his heels.

When some of heruime saw it, they informed other heruime who left the village to come back as the enemies were killed by Songlepa. So they returned back to the village. They expressed their gratitude and honour to Songlepa because he saved them from the enemies. They chopped off the heads of the ants, took them to their morung and hanged them on its roof.

Then Songlepa said to Mübungle, "I want to live with you here for the rest of my life." Then Mübungle replied,

"Still you are in flesh and blood but I am in the spirit. We cannot live together like in this manner for long. If you want to live with me forever, you go back to the land of the living and make a sacrifice with a pig. And if you want to live with others make a sacrifice with a bird."

The next day, the wildcat took him back to the land of the living. He told all the things what he saw and heard to his parents. Then his parents said,

"Why should we do sacrifice with bird?"

We shall do it with a pig and they did so. He did all the things according to the instruction given by his lover.

When he was sleeping outside the house during day time, suddenly just like a big bean fell straight from the sky to his heart and he died. Thus, he went to the world of the death and met his lover. They entered one of the morungs and saw the skull of a great bear. He asked his wife,

“Who killed this bear?”

She replied, “It was by you.”

When he looked up the roof, he saw countless skulls of ants. His wife again told that it was he who killed those enemies when he visited them before.

When they were alive, even though they loved each other dearly, their parents did not allow them to get married. But after death, in the land of the dead, Mübungle and Songlepa lived together happily forever.

22. Hetiemi

Once upon a time, Hetiemi (half man and half evil spirit who eats men) used to visit a village very often. Whenever he visited the village, one of the best boys or girls used to be snatched away and eaten by him. The appearance of Hetiemi was like a shadow, which used to move very fast. So it was impossible for a human being to fight with it.

There was a family of seven sons who were mighty and valor. Whatever the consequence they decided to hunt Hetiemi and kill it. In order to hunt down Hetiemi the seven brothers tamed one hunting dog each. In this way, they prepared well to chase the man eater spirit.

When the seven brothers were patiently waiting for its appearance, Hetiemi suddenly appeared. The eldest brother with his dog chased him first. The next day, the second eldest brother with his dog chased him and the third day, the third youngest brother with his dog. In this way, the seven brothers chased turn by turn without giving him a chance to rest or eat food for six days. Then the turn of the youngest brother came on the seventh day. The youngest brother with his dog chased Hetiemi who was running for the last seven days became too weak to run any further. He went to an orphan, who was threshing his paddy at that time, and begged to give him a hiding place there. But the orphan said,

“You will eat me if I hide you, so I cannot do that.”

Hetiemi replied,

“If you save me how can I harm you?”

The orphan felt pity on him; so he put him under the mat where he was threshing paddy and put paddy over it. At that

time, the seven brothers with their dogs came. The dogs scratched the mat with their paws and barked. So they asked the orphan turn over the mat. But the orphan said that there was nothing. Further, he said,

“According to our culture, it is forbidden to speak to the strangers when threshing paddy.”

The seven brothers then left him. As soon as they left, Hetiemi came out of his hiding place and said,

“I have not eaten food for so many days, so I will eat you now.”

The orphan then asked,

“How dare you eat me when I saved you from death?”

But Hetiemi insisted, because he was too hungry. Anyway, he gave the orphan a chance to say any wish he might like to say before swallowing him. The orphan then cleverly requested,

“Please then allow me to go home and say goodbye to my friends.”

Hetiemi agreed and allowed him to do so, but come back soon. The orphan went home, sharpened two knives, fixed them on his two toes and returned to Hetiemi.

Hetiemi said he would swallow the orphan upside down, but the latter asked him to swallow him from down up which Hetiemi agreed. So he swallowed the orphan from the leg side. When the legs of the orphan reached the neck of Hetiemi, the orphan struggled, and as his two legs struggled, the knives on his toes cut stomach, lungs, liver and other organs of Hetiemi. Out of pain, Hetiemi vomited him out. He attempted several times to swallow the orphan, but failed. So Hetiemi told him,

“I will give you power to know and speak the languages of all kinds of insects and animals; but remember that, as and when you told the people about this, you will be swallowed by me upside down.”

From that moment the orphan knew the languages of insects and animals, but never told anyone that secret for many years.

The king had a beautiful daughter and the orphan wanted to marry her. So he was looking for a chance to speak to the princess. Incidentally, once, the princess was going alone in the forest. The orphan saw her so he went near the princess and spoke to the flies to bite her severely. The flies obeyed. So many of them went and bit the princess causing unbearable pain to her. The princess requested the orphan for help, but he said,

“Unless you promise to marry me I cannot help you.”

The princess was never willing to become his wife so she refused. Then the orphan sent honey bee to sting her. Again she requested for help, but he told the same, but still she refused to marry him. At last, the orphan asked hornet to sting the princess. So many hornets came near the princess. Seeing the hornets, the princess was so frightened. So, finally, she promised to become his wife. On getting the promise the orphan sent away the hornets and saved her from harm.

The princess returned home and told her parents that she had promised to become the wife of the orphan as he saved her life that day. The king was grateful to the orphan and hence did not object him to marry his daughter. So the king arranged marriage ceremony for them and his daughter became the wife of the orphan.

After becoming the son-in-law of the king, his living standard had changed, but his manners remained like before in

many respects. So the king was upset with the behavior of the orphan. He felt it disgraceful, even though he saved the life of his daughter. Due to this, the king wanted to get rid of him.

One day when they were dinning in the king's chamber, he saw two flies, a male and a female, playing with a piece of rice on the thigh of his wife. The flies said to each other, "You, male, eat!" and kicked the rice to him, and the male flies said, "You, female, eat!" and kicked it toward her with laughter. Observing what the two flies were doing the orphan began to laugh loudly. The king felt angry and said,

"Do you see the loose character of my wife and my daughter? Why are you laughing?"

The king bound his hands and legs, and put him in a dark room without food and drinks for several days. But the orphan spoke to the ants to bring food and drinks for him. So the ants brought food and drinks from the king's table and put them into his mouth. As a result, his health did not decline. He did not even feel hungry or thirsty. The king was surprised. He found the orphan very peculiar. So he set him free and presented many gifts, that he might not feel bad for the punishment. After this incident, the king used to show due respect to the orphan.

The following day the orphan dressed up nicely, took a sword and went out to meet the king who was, at that time, riding on a horse. But as soon as he saw the orphan approaching, the king went and wore a blanket and came out to meet him. The orphan said to the king,

"I have not seen any loose character of your wife nor your daughter. But I heard and saw two flies playing with a piece of rice and said to one another, "You, male, eat!" and the

other said, "You, female, eat!" So I was so amused and laughed."

As soon as the orphan spoke those words to the king Hetiemi came to swallow him upside down. The orphan argued that he never told the king the language of insects or animals. But Hetiemi did not listen. The orphan fought Hetiemi with his sword. With his horse, he chased Hetiemi from North to South and from East to West, and at last, killed Hetiemi. Due to tiredness and dizziness he could not find his way home. As he was wandering in the forest of another kingdom, some servants of the king saw him and brought him to the king.

At night, when he was lying among the servants of the king, all of them slept away. He heard the noises of household materials talking to one other and hence could not sleep the whole night.

When he was observing things in the house he saw tail of a deer clipped towards north wall and a goat's towards south wall. They were silent; whereas all other things were talking to one another noisily. At last, the tail of deer and goat also began to talk to each another. The tail of goat said,

"Tail of deer, if people take you and touch anything saying you arise, then they can come to life; or say you die, then they will die." The tail of deer replied,

"Yes."

The tail of deer also said,

"Tail of goat, if people take you and touch anything saying you sleep, they will sleep; or say you awake, then they will wake up."

The tail of goat also said,

“Yes.”

The orphan took the tails of deer and goat. He touched the servants of the king with the tail of goat and said

“You sleep!”

As soon he gave the command all the servants of the king slept off. The orphan went away from there and when he went a little further away, he saw Hetiemi began to rise from the leg to its back. He touched him with the tail of the deer and said,

“You die”.

As soon as he said it, Hetiemi fell down and died. After which he was rotten away forever.

When he went further, he saw his dead horse. So he touched it with the tail of deer and said,

“Arise.”

Then the horse rose up and he rode back to his father-in-law’s palace.

His knowledge in understanding the languages of all animals and insects remained with him. After the death of his father-in-law, he reigned in his place and lived happily with his wife ever after.

23. Aten

Long ago, in a big village, Nkuilungdi, there lived a handsome and hard working man named Aten. His mother died when he was a small boy. As a result, his father, as a widower, faced various problems. So he took a new wife and they lived peacefully together in the beginning. But as years went by, his second wife gave births to many children. After getting many younger children, his parents started neglecting Aten in different ways; despite his hard work and contributions to their family requirements.

Besides helping his parents in all the works, Aten also did many noble things as a social worker by way of volunteering himself in social and village developments. Observing his good qualities, some of the people got jealous and attempted to bring ignominy to him. But they could not find any fault with him. Finally, they resorted to inflict him with a dreaded disease, and assigned a devilish woman to do the job.

One day, she invited Aten to her house for a dinner. She appeased Aten saying,

“You are doing many noble works for the village as well as for the society, so I would like to offer you dinner this evening, please come without fail.”

Aten took it as a great honor, and hence gratefully accepted the invitation. The woman prepared varieties of food. She cooked meat nicely and mixed it with her menses.

In the evening, when Aten came for dinner, she offered him food with all her sweet words and smiling faces. Aten was innocent. He did not have a slightest sneaking suspicion on her

sweet words that contained full of filths and her smiling faces that are stained with full of dirt. He gratifyingly ate well the dinner served by her, expressed his gratitude and went home.

The following day, sores started appearing all over his body. He suffered for many days and the disease became incurable. Aten became nuisance to the family, because he was even unable to move on his own without support from someone. Instead of feeling pity on him, his step mother commanded her husband to throw Aten away to the forest and let him die there. She warned her husband with ultimatum to divorce him if he did not do so. His father could not do this to his own son, no matter how much he had become nuisance to the family. At the same time, he had to consider the fate of other younger children if his wife divorced him. He had already faced hard time with one child after the death of his earlier wife. Now, he had many children to look after. It was impossible for him to handle all alone. He did not sleep the whole night, but thinking what to do with the ultimatum his wife had given to him. Aten's father had no other way to escape, so he took Aten to the forest and laid him on a large stone and returned home.

In the mean time, Aten had two lovers who always cared for him. The girls came to know the intention of his father through some source. So when his father took him to the forest, they hid and followed them keeping a certain distance from them. In that way, they knew the location in the forest where Aten was laid. After his father left, they went near Aten but could not climb up the stone, because it was too high for them. So they fixed his tiffin on one end of the pole and gave him. In that way, they used to supply him his daily requirements every day.

One day, when Aten was resting on the stone, by mistake, he cut off the tail of a *neitanrunne* (sand-lizard). It ran away to

the other side of the stone. Aten felt very sorry for injuring the innocent, though it was not intentional. He was regretfully looking at neitanrunne as it ran away from him. As he was looking at it, he saw that the neitganrunne plucked a kind of grass and applied it on its wound.

The following day, he again saw the same lizard coming towards him with its tail healed. Aten could not believe the miracle. He thought it was in his dream only. He plucked the same grass and applied all over his body. To his utter surprise, he saw that the sores all over his body were miraculously cured in the morning.

The next day, his two lovers came with his tiffin. Aten climbed down and showed them how the sores in his body were miraculously healed. They found it unbelievable. They were so happy and enquired how it happened within one night. And Aten told the whole incident of how he was cured. He then asked them to bring him hecam (sticky substance prepared out of fruit lets) and axe. So they brought them to him. With hecam he caught birds and gave his lovers to prepare food for them. With the axe he cut a tree and made ladder for them to climb up the stone. They spent a few days happily together there on the stone and went back home.

When Aten came back home he found that the footpaths of the village were full of weeds and very dirty. Before he felt sick his house was a morung in which about 20 to 30 young men used to come and sleep every night and it was he who used to keep the house very neat and clean always. But it was completely changed; the bed and the benches were full of dirt and no one slept in the morung. So he cleaned the footpaths of the village, washed the bed and benches of the morung properly and when it was evening he slept soundly on the bed of the morung.

In the evening, when the field goers returned home, they found that the village foot-paths were very clean. So they said to one another that it was like the time of Aten. They remembered how Aten used to clean the village foot-paths, wells and morung when he was alive. No one knew that Aten was still alive except the two girls.

When Aten's father and mother returned home from the field they saw that the morung was so clean and everything was arranged orderly. Tears rolled down from his father's eyes and he said to himself,

"Who does all the works? It is like the works of my son, Aten, when he was alive."

Then the younger brothers of Aten told their parents that Aten had returned home. Their father was stunned and said,

"Only his skeletons would be available scattering on the big stone in the forest."

But one of the children told that he was sleeping on the bed of the morung. His father went near him to ascertain if he were really Aten. As his father approached Aten woke up, held his father and paid him respect. The parents apologized for what they did to him.

Aten's father prepared a big feast for him that night and when they were happily eating and drinking both the parents died due to heart attack.

24. Ahünle's Father and Herabepui

Once upon a time, in one of the villages of Zeme, there lived a couple. A female child was born to them and they named her Ahünle. Ahü father was very fond of hunting. He would work in the field during the day and would hunt animals during evening and morning. Herabepui (female spirit) knew that most of the nights her father was not available at home so she came and asked Ahünle's mother the where abouts her husband. When she told her that, her husband had gone to the paddy field, Herabepui asked,

“Give me fire,” she obliged.

But Herabepui kept on coming and asking the same thing for several days continuously which had annoyed Ahünle's mother. But she knew that she would die if she refused to oblige, so she continued giving fire to Herabepui.

One night her husband returned from the field and she told how Herabepui had disturbed her for so many days. Her husband thought of doing away Herabepui. So sharpened his dao and bored a hole on the main door to enable Herabepui put her hand through it. When it was time for Herabepui to come, he closed the door firmly, took his dao and waited for her. As he was waiting, Herabepui came and asked for fire as before. Ahünle's mother said,

“Give me your hand through the hole and stretch it as much as you can.”

When she did so, he chopped it off. Herabepui cried out in pain and went away singing,

“Ahünle pui periak kesia;
Ahünle pei ramzeu zeudi,
A ba gwadi”

(Ahünle’s mother is tricky, Ahünle’s father slept in the terrace field and she chopped off my hand)

The hand of Herabepui seemed to be fatty and tasty so they cooked and ate it that night. After that, Ahünle’s father decided to go and hunt her. He took seven bows and a dozen of arrows and went in search of her.

As he went on searching, at last, he found Herabepui on a big banyan tree and tried to shoot at her. Then she said,

“Since you have come to killed me, I will allow you to shoot me first.”

He took one of his bows and arrows and aimed at her, but the bow broke before he could shoot at her. He took another bow and aimed at her, but it broke again. All the seven bows were broken before he could shoot her. He was very disappointed. He was left only with his sword. Anyway, he was determined to fight with her even with the lone sword. Herabepui climbed down from the tree and fought with him. She seized the sword from his hands and chopped them off. She ate his two hands first, then his whole body.

Ahünle’s mother was worried, because her husband did not return. So she requested some villagers to go and search for him. They went to the forest and called him from all directions. Then Herabepui imitated the voice of Ahünle’s father and replied,

“Hoi, I am returning.”

So the people returned and told Ahünle's mother that her husband was on his way back.

Herabepui took the form of Ahünle's father and went to his wife. Thinking that she was her husband, she asked,

"Why did you go away from me so many days without informing me?"

Herabepui could not give a proper reply. She served her food and drinks but Herabepui refused to take them. Sensing the strange behaviour, the woman realized that Herabepui had disguised herself as to be her husband. So she immediately applied her wits acting wisely to the stranger. With the pretext of washing the dishes outside, she went out and closed the door tightly from outside. She then informed all the villagers that Herabepui was in her house.

With spears and daos all the villagers came and surrounded the house, but no one dare to enter inside. As they were unable to find way how to kill her they finally lighted the house and burnt Herabepui to death.

The next morning Ahünle's mother with her child on her back visited their house expecting at least something was left not gutted by fire. She picked up and an object and gave it to her child. But as soon as the child touched it, it burst and killed both of them.

25. Squirrel and Hengumpui

Once, Hengumpui (a female blue pigeon) wanted to bless her child by celebrating a feast which had to be done by performing rites with a holy insect. But she was unable to find any insect which was holy and worthy of doing the job. As she was looking for an animal for help; fortunately, a squirrel came. She requested the squirrel to get a holy insect for her child's blessing ceremony and she promised to give him earrings if the latter obliged.

The squirrel agreed and climbed up a tall tree in search of some ritually clean insects. The squirrel passed through a dry branch and it broke. Meanwhile, a crab was crawling under the tree and the squirrel fell on it and fractured its shell.

In pain, the crab went and bit the tail of a snake which was sleeping. The snake got shocked and unknowingly it dived into the nest of a boar. Out of shock, the boar sprang upon a tree and accidentally its tusks cut off a tree branch on which a bat was hanging. The bat flew and entered into the ear of stag. The stag was frightened, and out of mind, ran over the food-bowl of Herabepui's (female spirit) child which was exposed to the sun and broke it.

Herabepui felt very bad with it. She rebuked the stag and asked, "Stag, why did you break my child's food-bowl?"

The stag replied, "I did not break it intentionally but because I was frightened by bat when I was thinking about my future partner."

Hearing the statement of the stag pushing the blame to the bat, Herabepui thought it necessary to investigate. So she went to the bat and asked,

“Bat, why did you enter the stag’s ear letting it run over my child’s food-bow and broke it?”

The bat replied,

“Oh! Herabepui, when I was peacefully sleeping, the boar came and cut off the tree branch which suddenly fell on me. I was nearly crushed to death by it. But luckily I escaped, and out of mind, I entered the ear of the stag.”

Herabepui then went to the boar and asked,

“Boar, why did you cut off the tree on which the bat was peacefully sleeping? The bat entered the stag’s ear which resulted to the stag running over my child’s food-bowl and broke it.”

The boar replied,

“Even after covering a large area of land searching for food I could not get enough to eat. I felt very tired and hungry so when I was taking rest and thinking which direction I should go next time, suddenly a snake dived on me and when I tried to escape unknowingly my tusks touched the tree and it fell.”

Herabepui then asked the snake,

“Snake, why did you dive into the boar’s nest? The boar got shock and letting it cut the tree branch on which the bat was resting? Due to this, the bat entered the stag’s ear, and the stag ran over my child’s food-bowl and broke it?”

The snake replied,

“I did not anticipate all these misfortunes would happen. When I was sleeping, I saw a dream that different kinds of animals were moving toward the east. Some of them were walking with four legs, some with two legs, but, we, the snakes did not have any legs. I felt very sorry for it and when I was thinking as to why, we, the snakes were cursed among all the animals I was suddenly awakened by a crab which bit my tail. The pain, I could not endure, so I sprang with my whole strength and unfortunately, I fell into the boar’s nest.”

Herabepui went to the crab and asked,

“Crab, why did you bite the snake’s tail and letting him dived into the boar’s nest?” Due to this, the boar cut off the bat’s tree, letting him entered the stag’s ear and the stag ran over my child’s food-bowl and broke it?”

The crab replied,

“Herabepui, look at my shell. As the proverb says, sign is clearer than words. When I was taking shelter under the tree, the squirrel fell on me from the top of tree and broke my shell. I needed a helper to take revenge. When I saw the snake sleeping I went and bit his tail to wake him up. But, he, instead of helping me, moved away as fast as a shooting arrow.”

Herabepui then went and asked the squirrel. The squirrel made his statement,

“As my first son got married I needed to give my present shelter to the new couple. When I was searching for a new shelter for my family, on the way, I met Hengumpui who needed my service. She asked me to bring some ritually clean insects for her child’s blessing ceremony. So I climbed up a

tall tree and when I passed through a dry branch and it suddenly broke. If I have wings I would have flown away like a bird. But, as I did not wing, I fell and landed upon the crab. I did not even know that there was the crab under. Both of us were very unfortunate. When I fell down, my head dashed against his shell and was almost broken. I felt unconscious for a long time.”

Herabepui asked Hengumpui the reason for her to send the squirrel for such a difficult task. But Hengumpui could not give any convincing reply. So Herabepui summoned a meeting and charged her as because of her unreasonable assignment given to the squirrel so many accidents took place. So she had to bear the consequences and pay for all the damages.

In order to pay for the damages, Hengumpui laid a big basket full of eggs and distributed two eggs each to everyone she had caused trouble and one each to everyone who were present in the meeting.

Hengumpui had only two eggs left with her so she kept them in her mouth. She hopped along the river bank meditating upon the whole episode. Suddenly, she jumped on the slippery stone and fell which resulted to breaking one of the eggs in her mouth. Due to his reason, from that day onwards, Hengumpui began to lay only one egg at a time.

26. Heneigarieng

During ancient days, like any other Nagas, young boys and girls of Zeme villages used to go and sleep in their own respective morungs in the night. It was their culture that every year they would observe a day of collecting firewood for their morungs. This was so because, every night before retiring to bed, boys and girls used to make camp-fire in the morungs and discussed various issues pertaining to village affairs. Normally, each clan in the village had their own respective morungs: one for boys and another for girls. For collecting firewood, the youth of different clans would go to the jungle in groups of respective morungs.

Once, when a group of clan went to collect firewood for their morungs a girl was late and missed the group. She ran and tried to catch her peers, but as she was too late, they had gone far ahead of her. As she was running after her peers along the path in the jungle, on the way, she met a handsome young man named Heneigarieng who inquired as to why she was running like that. She explained to him the reason. So he pacified her saying,

“Don’t worry! I will collect firewood for you as much as you need.”

The girl was initially reluctant, because he was a stranger. So she made polite excuses to him and tried to go further to catch her friends. But the boy insisted saying that she need not worry since she was only to collect firewood. Therefore, it was not necessary to go that far. When the boy said like that, a thought came to her mind. She realized that it would not be so necessary to go further if the boy could fill her basket with

firewood. She was then convinced finally and put down her basket on the ground. The boy asked her to sit down by the side of the path. As she sat down he covered her with her basket and then spread the cloth on top of the basket so that she might not be able to see him when collecting firewood. He advised her never to open the cover till he had collected enough fire-wood for her. The girl said okay.

After the girl was fully covered with the cloth on the basket, he transformed into a large snake and climbed up a tall tree. He broke dry branches by twisting them with his body and dropped the broken branches to the ground. The fall of the branches produced great noises, so she became curious of what was going on. She opened a little portion of the cloth and peeped at him through it. To her utter surprise, she saw a big snake on the tree breaking dry branches. She was so frightened, hence left everything behind and ran home. She told her parents about the strange snake. Her parents were bewildered. Since it was a great mystery, they thought it necessary to keep her extraordinary care. So they did not allow her to go anywhere alone.

Whenever the villagers observed such a day, it was their culture that all the youth get together in their respective morungs and feasted together: boys in boy's morung and girls in girl's morung. For the feast, families used to donate varieties of kinds with which they would barter for meat and rice. The youths would visit each house in the evening and collect the donations. When evening came, some of her friends came to their house and called her to accompany with them for collecting donations. But due to the strange thing she saw that day, her parents did not permit her to go out with them. However, her friends insisted her to go with them assuring that

she would be taken care by them. So the parents hesitatingly allowed her to go out with her friends.

Nothing disturbed them when they were going round the village and collecting the donations. But they still did leave any chance. So before retiring to bed in their morung, they closed all the holes, doors and windows and let her sleep in the middle of them. In the mid-night, when all the girls slept away, Heneigarieng came and found that all the doors, windows and holes were closed. He went round the morung and found a hole of rat. He turned into a snake and entered the morung through it. Then he transformed into a very handsome young man and took away the girl away without waking up the other girls.

In the morning when the girls woke up they found friend missing. They could not find her anywhere in spite of searching for in every corner. They were so afraid to inform her parents, but there was no other way, they had to inform them about the missing of the girl. Her parents, relatives and all the other youth of the village went in search of her for many days but could not trace her.

After the gap of some months, a thought came to her brothers suspecting that she must have been taken away by the snake boy to some caves in the forest. So they decided to go to the forest and search in whatever caves they found in the forest. As the brothers and the parents went in search of the girl in the caves all over the forest, they saw many baby snakes without the mother in a particular cave. The baby snakes called them, “apao, apai” (grandpa, grandma). The brothers and her parents said, “What apao and apai” and killed all of them.

After awhile, Heneigarieng and his wife came and found that all their children were killed. She wept for her children but Heneigarieng comforted her saying,

“They do not know that they are your children, so please don’t cry we may get many more children in future.”

Heneigarieng welcomed them and expressed his happiness for visiting them. But the parents of his wife and her brothers did not want her to be the snake’s wife. But, at the same time, they also realized that the girl could not be separated from the snake because she had already received the love charm from him. So they offered him wine mixed with poison. Heneigarieng said, “The wine is very tasty” and he drank all the wine. He died after drinking, and his dead body was transformed into a very big snake. Then his wife wept. Her parents as well as brothers tried to console her, but she was inconsolable. They asked her to follow them but she refused. Since there was no other way to convince her, force became only the option. By force, her brothers took her home. But she still continued crying day and night. Everyone, even other villagers made various attempts to comfort her, but in vain.

Since there was no other means to console her from grief, the parents asked their sons to bring a large snake from the forest for their daughter. They went to the forest and caught a large snake and brought it home. They put it in a room and brought their sister to the snake and locked the room. Seeing the snake her cry turned into laughter. She laughed for a long time so her parents thought that they were making love. The next day, however, when they opened the door they found only her bones. So they killed the snake.

27. Nsanglung

Long ago, there lived a man called Nsanglung. He was so handsome that even female spirits used to fall for him. One day, a female spirit transformed herself into a very beautiful girl and met Nsanglung on the way. They exchanged romantic words on the way, and soon after that, they fell for each other. Finally, they agreed to get married.

A few days after their marriage, Nsanglung told his wife that he would visit her village. But the village of his wife was a place where evil spirits lived and those evil spirits could transform themselves into human forms any time. His wife had to hide her identity, so she informed the villagers in advance that they should all transform into human beings because her husband was visiting them.

When Nsanglung visited his father-in-law, all the family members of his wife turned into men and they warmly welcomed him. They gave him great hospitality by way of serving him good food and drink. He spent the night comfortably, and the next day, when he was going back, they said to him,

“Whenever you visit us, please yell at the gate of the village.”

Nsanglung wondered as to why they asked him to yell before entering the village. He wanted to know the reason. So one day, when he was visiting his father-in-law, he entered inside the village without yelling at the gate. But when he reached the gate of his father-in-law, he yelled and entered the house. As soon as they heard the yell of Nsanglung, they hurriedly tried to transform themselves into human forms. But

they could not do so in such a short notice. He saw some of them half transformed, some others were still in the form of evil spirits. He saw their eyes as big as apple, mouths as long as trumpets and their bodies fully covered with long hairs. Slowly they all transformed into human form.

Nsanglung found that they were not men but evil spirits, so he wanted to return home the same day. After having meal he tried to return home. But it was a long journey so they prepared food for him so as to eat it on his way. They also sent dinner for his wife.

On the way Nsanglung ate his food. He felt curious to see what kind of food they had packed for his wife. He opened the food packet for his wife and found there were white things like hail-stone mixed with fingers of men. When he reached home he gave his wife the food packet sent by her parents. He said to her,

“There are some sort of food mixed with fingers; whether you will eat or not.”

Then she replied,

“Why should I eat fingers of men?”

Saying this she threw them in one corner of the house. Nsanglung pretended to go to the morung to sleep there, but instead of going there he hid in the house that night. He was watching whether his wife would take the food or not. Then his wife turned into evil spirit; all her body was covered with long hairs, her eyes were as big as orange and her mouth as long as trumpet. She ate the food sent by her parents and after eating it she again turned into the form of a beautiful woman and slept.

Nsanglung realized that he had married an evil spirit. So he went quietly to her with a nail and a hammer and smote the nail into her temples and she died.

The next day, he informed her brothers that his wife died. So the brothers came and took away her dead body to their village. When they passed through the hills they wept, but quarreled among themselves when they entered the low land; each claiming to take the best portion of their sister.

When they were eating her flesh they found that she did not die a natural death but was killed by Nsanglung with nail. They chased after Nsanglung to revenge. They did not give up chasing him, and it went on for many days. Later, Nsanglung became too exhausted and could not run any further. He climbed up a tall tree and hid there. The evil spirits followed him by his footprints and reached the tree where Nsanglung was. Beyond the tree they did not see his footprints anymore. So they took rest under the tree.

When they were taking rest under the tree, Nsanglung wanted to discharge his urine too badly. He could not control his urine any further. When he pissed, his urine dropped on them like rain. So the evil spirits thought that it was heavy rain and ran away. After they left, Nsanglung also climbed down from the tree and went home safely.

28. Teirum and Teirie

Once two men called Teirum and Teirie came to one of the Zeliang villages and asked the people to give them a shelter for a few days. So the villagers constructed a small thatch hut for them. They stayed there for only a few days and made a business with the villagers. During the day, they would mingle with the people but at night, they would remain quietly in their small hut. They told the people never to visit them, especially their dinner time.

In the village, there was a wise man named, Tsingpeirieswang, who had two daughters. Tsingpeirieswang was able to differentiate between good and evil. So whenever there arose any problems among the people, he used to judge them. When he saw Teirum and Teirie, he came to know that there were some evils in them. So he asked the villagers to be careful when they dealt with those two evil men.

Tsingpeirieswang's daughters were curious about the two men, so during night time while they were having dinner, they secretly went and peeped at them through a hole. The following day, Teirum and Teirie were ready to leave the village, but before leaving, they instructed the villagers to dismantle their house as soon as they left the village. Saying this they hurriedly left the village.

When the people came to dismantle their house they found that the house was just like ashes. When they touched the house it became ashes, because they possessed some demonic power.

29. Asampeï

Once there lived a slow-witted man whose name was Asampeï. He had wife and one son. His son fell sick and died when his wife was away in the field. He loved his wife so dearly that he never liked to see her in sorrow. He thought that his wife was so sentimental and would surely be in full sorrow if she saw the dead body of their son. So, in order to make her feel that everything was normal at home when she returned from field he wanted to dispose off their son's dead body before her arrival. In great hurry he rolled the dead body of his son in a mat and carried it through the footpath to be thrown away into a pit. When he was carrying the dead body, on the way, it slipped off from the mat behind which he did not notice. He threw the empty rolled mat into the pit and returned home. On his way back he saw his son's dead body but he took it as to be the dead body of someone else's son. So he murmured,

“Not only my son died, but someone else's son also died.”

When his wife returned home from the field, she inquired about their son. Asampeï told her that their son died so he threw his dead body into the pit. He said,

‘You will surely be in sorrow if you see his dead body.’

With a great sorrow she went towards the pit thinking that her son's dead body was lying there in the pit, but before reaching the spot she found her son's dead body on the road side.

was doing. He crawled head down, but lost balance and fell head down. All the mangoes in the basket fell down and scattered here and there. Fortunately, as he fell, his head hit soft earth where there was no stone. When he got up, he saw the depression on the ground caused by his head. He thought it was footprint of an elephant. He got so scared thinking that the elephant could still be wandering nearby. He quickly picked up few mangoes, threw them into the basket and rushed away. As he ran the mangoes moved and rolled to and fro in the basket. He advised them not to make noise, because elephant might hear them. However, the mangoes did not listen. The mangoes continued moving in the basket as he ran. He rebuked them as to be very disobedient and threw all of them away and came back home empty basket.

His wife was so upset with him so she told all that happened to her husband to their grandfather who was living with them. Asampeï did not even know how to make a simple bamboo basket. So his grandfather tried to teach him how to make bamboo basket. When his grandfather was teaching and demonstrating him how to make bamboo basket, he attentively watched and listened to him. As soon as his grandfather finished he said,

“Grandpa, there are seven holes in a man’s face referring to the eyes, the nostrils, the mouth and the ears.”

They were very happy and from that moment onwards they ceased begging. They were very active and intelligent, too. They worked hard helping their parents day and night. Gradually, they became self-sufficient.

After a few years, both of them got married. In the past, they never went outside their village so they wanted to go out for adventure. They went to a far village, but there was no place for them to take shelter. They entered a house and requested the owner to permit them take shelter that night. The owner of the house said,

“In our village, we used to give a handsome man or a beautiful girl to the demon for food once every month; otherwise, it used to kill many people every week. It is our turn to offer our daughter to the demon.”

Miakciepbe and Kiacumbe said,

“Do not worry! If you allow us to spend the night we can do everything in the right way.”

So the owner of the house allowed them to spend the night in their house with them. They sealed the doors, windows and all the holes that night. They slept on the grinding-board of rice which was just at the door. The demon tried to enter the house but found all the doors, windows and holes sealed. So he transformed himself into a crab, made a hole on the roof just above the location where the two were to sleep. But accidentally it fell straight into the hole of grinding-board. Then Miakciepbe and Kiacumbe covered him with clothes in their hands and pressed down the crab with full strength. When they were doing that to the crab, wife and children of the

demon, who were waiting outside, wept and begged them to release their father. But they replied,

“We have no demon, but a crab. We want to give it to our grandmother. She likes to eat crab very much. So we cannot release it.”

Then the wife of the demon promised to gift them a dao which could kill even devil if they agreed to free her husband. They did not believe her initially, but as she assured they asked her to give it to them first. But she only gave them an ordinary one. So they pressed the crab harder and was about to die. After which she gave them the real dao she had promised. They took it and asked them to never come back to the village in future. She agreed. So on that condition, they released the crab. The demons fled away and thereafter never came and disturbed the villagers anymore.

With the dao they went to another village to seek their fortune. They entered inside a house as the earlier occasion and asked the owner for permission to permit them take shelter the night. Incidentally, however, it happened to be the house of Hekimpei (half devil and half man). Hekimpei allowed them to take shelter in his house. But when he saw their dao he wanted to own it; because, he could see the magical power in the dao which could even kill devil. Hekimpei planned a trick and said,

“I want you to enjoy mutton tonight.”

He took a nice dao and called his wife to him. When she came he chopped her head and she died. Suddenly it turned into a dead sheep. After awhile, the dead woman rose again and enjoyed dinner with them. Then he asked them whether

they would like to exchange their dao with his. They were so fascinated to see the magical power of Hekimpei's dao. They thought they could get mutton any time if they exchanged Hekimpei's with theirs. So they agreed for exchange.

Since they had only one dao they decided to use it turn by turn. First, it was Miakciepbe's turn. As he returned home the following day, with excitement, he told his wife in the evening,

"We will enjoy mutton tonight."

He then chopped off his wife's head and she died. He waited several hours for her to turn into dead sheep rise up. But she neither turned into dead sheep nor did she rise up. So the whole night he dug the earth and buried her.

The next day, early in the morning, Kiacumbe came and inquired about their dao. Miakciepbe did not tell him the truth but said,

"It works excellently well" and passed the dao to him.

Kiacumbe happily took the dao and went home. As soon as he reached home, he told his wife,

"We will enjoy mutton today."

He then chopped off his wife's head as Hekimpei did. She died, but she neither turned into dead sheep nor did she rise up.

Thus, both of them lost their wives. They realized that Hekimpei had cheated them so they went to meet Hekimpei in his house. But they found that the house was bolted inside. There was a hole to peep through so Kiacumbe peeped through

the hole keeping his nose and eyes very close to it. At the same time, Hekimpei knew that the two would surely return to take back their dao. So he made everything ready in advance. As soon as Kiacumbe kept his nose very close to the hole he cut it off. Then Kiacumbe covered his nose with his two hands and said,

“Hekimpei died and already stank.”

Miakciepbe also did as Kiacumbe and his nose was also cut off. So without their nose they returned to their village. Their look became so odd that no girls liked to marry them. So they had to live as widower thereafter.

31. Paukwetleung

There was once a man named Paukwetleung, in Benreu village. He was very honest, a good wrestler and sportsman, too. He loved his neighbors and villagers more than himself. Because of his good nature, all the villagers trusted him and respected him as to be a good and an honest leader. Whenever any dispute arose among the villagers, without any partiality, he used to give right judgment.

In one occasion, the king gave a big sum of money for poor people in the village. When the poor people came to know about it, all were very happy expecting to receive their shares. But it so happened that even rich people also wanted to share the money. So there was a big commotion among them. Few people said, the money should be given to the poor only; but majority of the people wanted to share the money equally. They could not resolve the dispute, so they called Paukwetleung.

When Paukwetleung spoke, all the people kept silent and listened attentively to his speech. He said many things for the welfare of the village and one point which touched the people most was,

“Our village is one of the most advanced villages among our tribe so we should show good example to other villages. The king gave the money for specific purpose, and if we use it in the wrong way, all other people also will follow us. There will be full of corruption in the near future. So please remember one thing; if there is work to do, I will do it, and if there is some thing to eat, you eat it.”

Hearing his wise advice all the people appreciated him and gave the money to the poor only. The rich men felt ashamed of their greed and covetousness.

Whenever there was any landslide or blockage on ways to the fields or wells, he was the first person to work removing all the hindrances. Seeing his good example all people followed him and there was peace and prosperity in the village.

Paukwetleung was also a rich man and very often he used to give in cash or kind to the poor. Unfortunately, there arose a great revival of Kampai religion which had deceived many people. One of its teachings was that,

“Without going to school also if people use their books as their pillows they can understand whatever is written in the book.”

Paukwetleung had many children, and believing the teaching he stopped sending his children to school. But even if his children used books as their pillows for many years they did not understand what was written in the books. He realized that it was a false teaching, so he left the faith. He wanted to send his children back to school, but was too late; because all of them had grown too old except the youngest one. So he let only the youngest son continued study.

He did many good works during his life time, for his children as well as for the people. He died at a very old age.

30. Miakciepbe and Kiacumbe

Once upon a time there lived two handicapped persons named, Miakciepbe and Kiacumbe, in Punglwa village. Miakciepbe was blind; while waist of Kiacumbe was deformed. He could neither stand straight nor lift up his head. Parents of both of them were so poor that they were unable to take proper care for them.

Even though they were already grown big, they could not do any physical work to earn their livelihood. Their only option was to go begging together in the streets. Kiacumbe, being able to see, held Miakciepbe's hand and the latter carried a bowl to keep whatever they received alms from the people. People used to feel sorry for them and used to contribute generously either cash or kind. In this way, they used to receive enough food every day.

This continued for many days. But one particular day, they did not get anything and they felt so hungry. Kiacumbe found so many earthworms on their way, so he collected them and brought home. He cooked them properly and served them to his compatriot without letting him know that they were earthworms.

Miakciepbe tasted them and said they were very tasty. As soon as he had eaten half of the plate, his eyes were opened and could see things clearly. When he saw that Kiacumbe gave him earthworms which were never eaten by people he felt so disgusted and insulted, too. With his anger he kicked Kiacumbe's waist hard and as soon as kicked, the deformed waist became alright. He was then able to stand straight and his body structure became normal.

A few days after his son's death, Asampeï went to woodland and cut down grass for shifting cultivation. That day happened to be heavy rain and when he was cutting the grass with his dao his paws became slippery. He could not grip the dao firmly. As a result it slipped off from his hands. He bent down and picked it up. And as he touched the blade of the dao it was cold. Asampeï remembered that once a friend told him that when man or animal died the body becomes very cold. He thought that his dao was already dead so he threw it away.

After throwing his dao away, Asampeï had no other implement to work with. Since it was still raining, he sat down on a stone. After sitting for awhile a cold sensation came to his buttock. He touched his buttock with his hand and felt it very cold. He spoke to himself,

"I am dead."

He lied on the stone and continued lying there. He did not come home, though it was time for him to return. So, his wife went in search of him and found him lying on a stone in their field. She asked what he was doing. He replied,

"I learnt that people become cold after they died and I found my buttock very cold, so I thought I died. That is why I am lying dead here."

His wife brought him home, and in the morning she asked him to go and collect mangoes from their mango garden which was a little far away from the village. Asampeï went to the garden and then climbed up a mango tree. He filled his basket with mangoes. When he was about to climb down with the basket on his back, he saw a squirrel on the opposite tree smartly crawling down. He thought squirrel's way of descending head down is better way of climbing down from the tree. He tried to descend from the tree as how the squirrel

After they left, demons touched the two daughters of Tsingpeirieswang and gave them power to do evil things. They then began to eat up their own clothes and dresses of their friends, too. Their friends felt very bad with what the two daughters did to their clothes. So they complained to their parents.

One sunny day, when Tsingpeirieswang was scorching paddy in the sunshine, he called his two daughters to him and said,

“Look at the sky! When you see an eagle, point at it with your fingers and make a loud sound “chie”.

As they were watching, they saw an eagle flying in the sky so they pointed at it with their fingers and shouted “chie.” Then the eagle died and fell down in front of them. There, Tsingpeirieswang came to know that his two daughters were demon possessed.

When the time came for marriage, one of the girls got married to a Kuki and the other one got married to a Liangmai. So even today, Zeme people believed that some Kukis and Liangmais possessed the power of demon. Due this they are often troubled with different kinds of diseases.

